AUSTRALIAN ADVENTURE BIKE MAGAZINE

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FLAIR ... FROM CHINA

ISSUE 31
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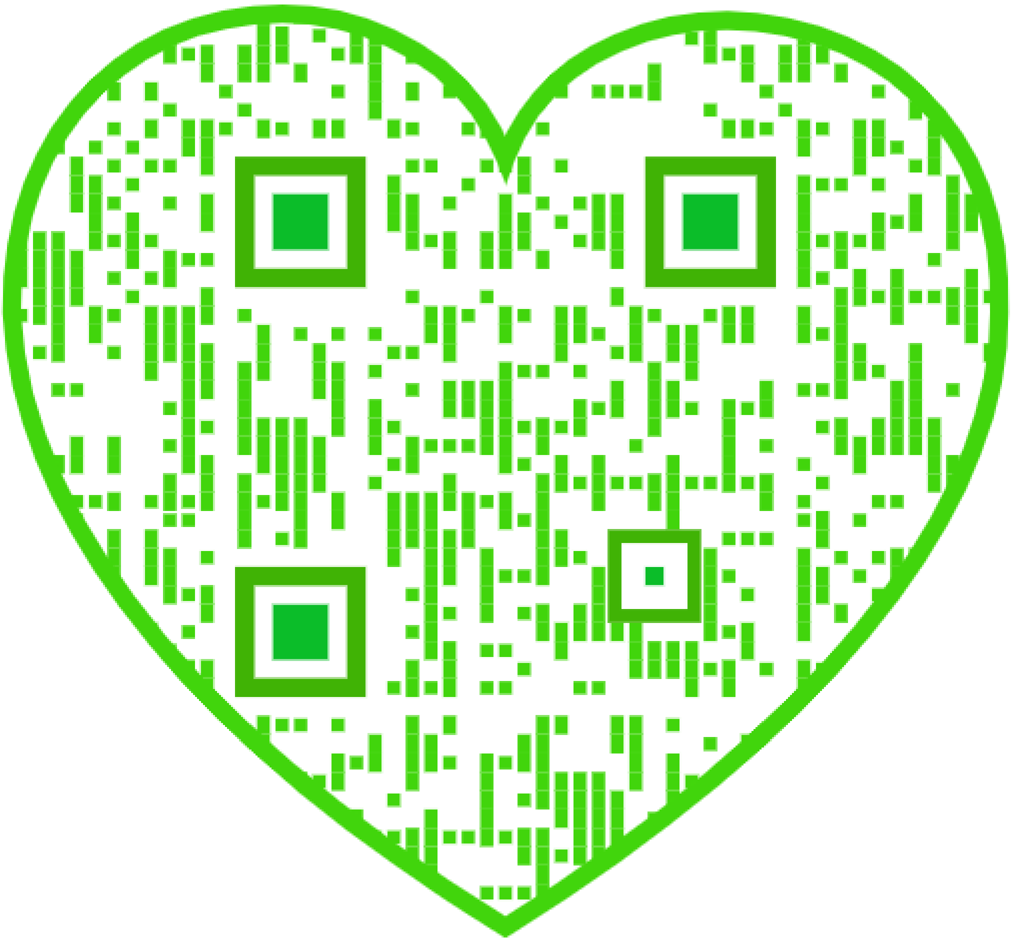
A TALE OF TWO 450s: CFMOTO 450 MEETS ROYAL ENFIELD HIMALAYAN 450
TONKA TOUGH: BMW'S BARNSTORMING R 1300 GS ADVENTURE
TAKE THE HIGH ROAD: ROMPING AROUND AT THE WALCHA MOTORCYCLE RALLY
EXTREME NAMIBIA: BMW GS INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGE
MOTOVERSE: DIVING DEEP INSIDE INDIA'S ADVENTURE FESTIVAL
CHARLES IN CHARGE: CATCHING UP WITH CHARLEY BOORMAN



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Mitch Newell and the Benelli TRK 702 X take the long way to the Walcha Motorcycle Rally. Photo: Clubby

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MAKING A SPLASH

Any day in the saddle of an adventure bike is a great day. Even when your chosen line takes you straight through a filthy mud hole. But the golden rule is always 'power on and front end light' to try and get as little of the dirty brown bow wave on yourself.

PHOTO: MARCO CAMPELLI/KTM

TUNNEL VISION

Adventure riding is always about solving the mystery of what comes next. What's around the next corner? Or over the next hill? Or at the end of the next tunnel? And the best thing is, whatever happens to be lying in wait, it will be the next adventure!

PHOTO: TSCHANN E/HUSQVARNA

WIDE BROWN LAND

When the World Raid meets the Aussie outback, you bet good times are on the agenda. It's all about the adventure, through every single mile!

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LEFT: The orange army is facing its toughest fight in 32 years. Can Stefan Pierer and the KTM brand come back from the financial brink ... again? Photo: Tschann E/KTM

KTM RIDES THE EDGE ... AGAIN

Over two billion euros. That's a hell of a lot of zeros.

A business just doesn't get that deep in the red — or in this case, shall we say, burnt orange — in short order. KTM and the Pierer Mobility Group's fiscal woes must have been building for some time and only as the business filed for self-administration late last year did the true numbers begin to reach the public domain.

To think KTM/PMG reportedly had around 130,000 unsold motorcycles and 80,000 unsold bicycles on its books is gob-smacking. That's so much uncapitalised stock, yet even if they could all be sold ASAP, it would barely make a dent in the debt. Gulp.

ORANGE DEJA VU

But it's not the first time KTM has teetered on the edge of the financial precipice. In fact, in 1990 KTM tipped right over the edge and was formally declared bankrupt.

Back then the company, which was founded in 1953 by partners Ernst Kronrief and Hans Trunkenpolz in Mattighofen, Austria, (hence the KTM brand name from the initials K, T and M), had produced only motorcycles, mopeds and bicycles, but eventually diversified into production of radiators and oil-coolers for two and four-wheeled vehicles. But the new business lines never became profitable and the necessary capital investment, along with a concurrent downturn in bike and moped sales, brought the brand to its knees.

Austrian businessman and entrepreneur Stefan Pierer's Cross Industries was part of a consortium that swooped to purchase KTM from the ashes, and as Pierer explained in an interview last year, he has "made KTM his life" ever since.

But as I type these words, Pierer has the economic fight of his life on his hands to salvage his most prized asset: the KTM/PMG empire that he has overseen for more than 30 years as it has relentlessly charged from producing 6000 motorcycles in 1992 to more than 380,000 units in 2023 in factories in Austria, China and India.

And what a fight it is.

PROFITS & PERILS

It makes for an intriguing story of the profits and perils of modern-day automotive engineering, manufacturing and selling specifically, and big business in general, where the difference between success or failure is defined by a razor's edge.

KTM/PMG's growth to be Europe's largest motorcycle manufacturer with a global workforce of over 6000 employees and 13 years of consecutive record sales has certainly been astounding, but in the current economic climate, the bubble surely had to burst sometime.

20/20 hindsight is a wonderful thing. Could KTM's record year-on-year growth really be sustained? Why purchase Husqvarna and GasGas and then have to compete against yourself, and then take a big stake in MV Agusta? What of the handling of the LC8 cams issue and customer warranty concerns, and the lasting negative impact this had on brand goodwill? Does the world really want/need a KTM X-Bow sportscar? And does a brand that makes precious few high-performance road bikes really benefit from spending multi-millions in contesting MotoGP?

They're all fair questions right now. And only the beginning of the many questions shareholders, creditors and financial authorities will have.

But what of the workers? The suppliers? And the dealers? All the creditors, big and small — and there are more than a thousand of them. They're the ones you really have to feel for.

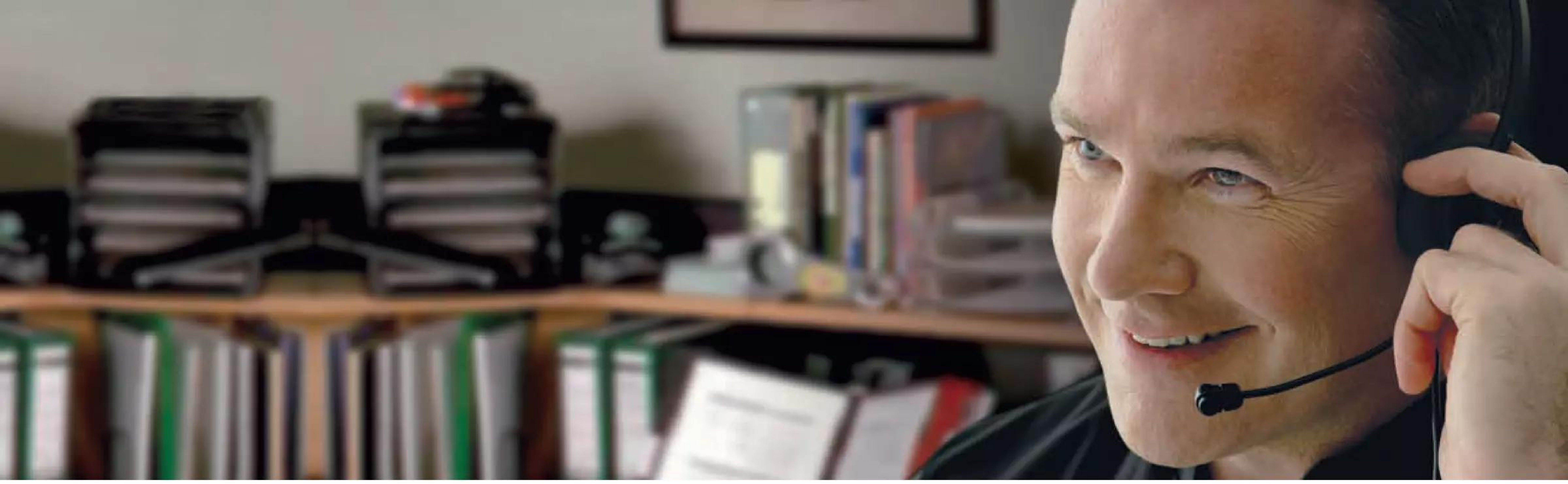
All of them are intrinsically linked to a billionaire Austrian businessman who has had to stump up, or might otherwise be told to move on if the bean-counters have to lock the gates to prepare for a fire sale, should history repeat itself in a case of KTM bankruptcy deja vu.

PIERER'S PLAN

Late last year KTM/PMG announced it had instituted a 90 day self-administration 'pit stop' upon its operations and would attempt to negotiate new funding and debt restructuring in an effort to get its house back in order.

Can Stefan Pierer bring his beloved KTM/PMG back from the brink?

The dice have been rolled, and the entire motorcycling world is watching on. By the time this issue of AAB hits the streets, we should have a much clearer picture of the answers. — Clubby



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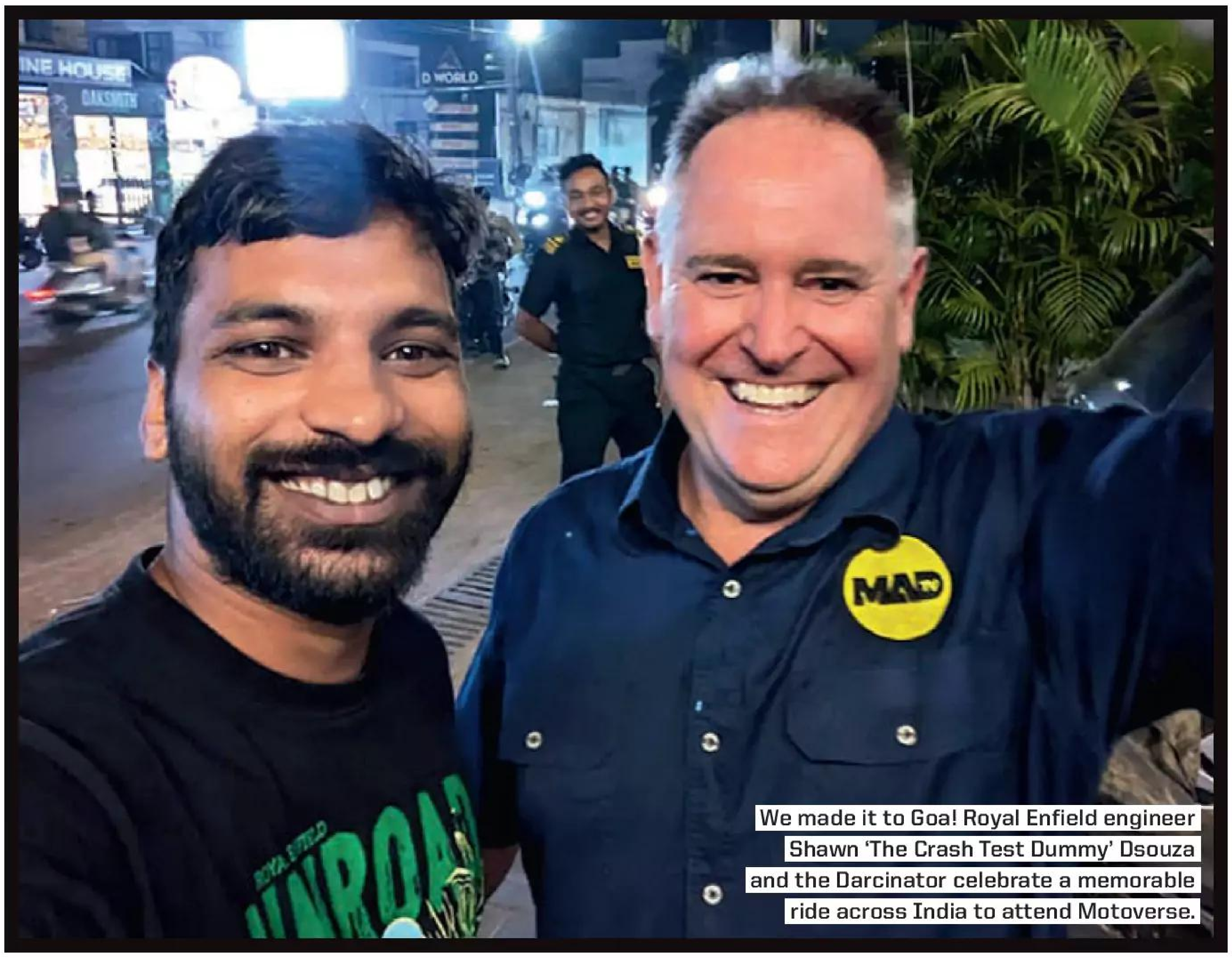

We made it to Goa! Royal Enfield engineer Shawn 'The Crash Test Dummy' Dsouza and the Darcinator celebrate a memorable ride across India to attend Motoverse.

GOA OR BUST!

Tinder for motorcyclists: is that a thing? Over the years, I've seen a few couples take their first steps toward romance on the trails. Jeez, courtship? Is that even a word these days? Replace that with hook-up! Or maybe not?

Those motorcycle tours can be dangerous things, particularly the ones in far north Queensland, where you're up to your armpits in water likely filled with snapping handbags while carrying DR-Zs with sticks through the wheels. The adversity of jungle heat, humidity and difficult trails forges lifelong memories and friendships. But are friendships conducive to marriage?

Nugget, our partners and I recently travelled to Cairns to witness our good friends Woody and Ellyse of Ellwood Motorcycle Adventures tie the knot. This was a match made in heaven.

Woody is the svelte, no-nonsense trail boss who remains unfazed by anything that crops up on the trail. Then there's Ellyse, a stunning, bubbly, naturally positive ray of sunshine with a sparkle in her eye that lights up the room. She's an outstanding rider who can blast most blokes to the weeds on a trail and, to top it off, is a qualified electrician. Woody has jagged a one-in-a-million! They make an awesome couple. We wish them all the best.

MEANWHILE, BACK IN AUSTRIA

Unless you've been living under a rock — or don't have a gloating mate who's a rusted-on Yamaha rider — you may have heard about KTM's financial woes. Formal proceedings have commenced and the scope of the debt is a lot worse than first rumoured.

Plenty of people are already writing them off. As I type these words, I think it's way too early for that. KTM has strong partnerships in both China and India, and motorcycle manufacturing giant Bajaj holds a 49 per cent stake in the company. Bikes are made a hell of a lot more efficiently in these countries, and quality has significantly improved in recent years. We're witnessing this firsthand with the arrival of the CFMOTO 450 MT and Royal Enfield Himalayan 450.

It would be a sad day to lose KTM from Australia — not only in terms of bikes, but also for all the dedicated KTM, Husqvarna and GasGas staff and dealers who could find themselves in hardship through no fault of their own. Let's hope a solution can be found.

The timing couldn't be worse if it jeopardises the launch of the much-awaited KTM 390 Adventure R. If that bike is sharp on price, it could shake up the domination of the Himalayan and CFMOTO, which currently have the 450 class all to themselves. But it won't be an easy battle, with BMW's new F 450 GS on the way and Kove rumoured to finally reach Australian shores in the first quarter of 2025.

If my YouTube channel statistics are anything to go by, the arrival of purpose-built 450 adventure bikes is sending shockwaves through the motorcycle industry. My female audience has close to tripled — from five per cent to almost 15 per cent — as women scramble for knowledge about these smaller, adventure-ready mounts. These bikes conveniently, cheaply and comfortably offer them access to adventure.

And then there's the huge increase in riders and prospective riders seriously considering purchasing these bikes, which offer affordable, comfortable adventures and commuting at a reasonable price.

WELL VERSED

I've just returned from an east-west crossing of southern India. Normally, I head to the Himalayas in the far north of the country, but Royal Enfield's Chief of Design Mark Wells convinced me to explore the south instead. No icy peaks or vast, arid landscapes here, just dense jungle, muddy trails courtesy of the monsoon, and stunning racetrack-smooth tarmac that goes on forever.

We were on a motorcycle pilgrimage to Royal Enfield's massive Motoverse event, which is a celebration of all things RE on the west coast. Check out that ride and my Motoverse experience in this issue.

And while you're at it, we've also reviewed the all-new BMW R 1300 GS Adventure for this issue. If my experience with its predecessor, the 1250 GSA Rhino, is anything to go by, it will be a surprisingly agile bike with true super-tourer capabilities. I recently cranked out a couple of thousand kilometres from Darwin to Broome on the R 1300 GS Trophy. It ate up outback roads for breakfast! The only thing I yearned for was more fuel range, so the GSA might just be the ticket. — Dave Darcy

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Dave Darcy is the Producer of the Motorcycle Adventure Dirtbike TV channel on YouTube. Grab a beer, settle back and press Play!

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KTM IN CRISIS

Long-time KTM owner and CEO Stefan Pierer (right) and his more recently appointed Co-CEO Gottfried Neumeister are fighting to keep the KTM/PMG Group alive. Photo: Tschann.E/KTM

As we go to press with this issue, the KTM Group and parent Pierer Mobility Group are facing the financial fight of their lives to avoid being declared bankrupt.

Late last year KTM implemented drastic measures to stave off formal bankruptcy, after revealing the group had debts of some 2.9 billion euros and a stockpile of hundreds of thousands of unsold motorcycles and bicycles around the world. On November 29, KTM entered a voluntary 'self-administration' insolvency process, impacting some 2500 creditors and more than 3600 employees. An Austrian court-appointed administrator is overseeing KTM's restructuring plans, with a 90-day timeline established in which to determine the company's future.

At the heart of KTM/PMG's woes is a massive glut of unsold motorcycles and bicycles, the result of post-pandemic over-production. Increasing inflation, climbing interest rates and rising production costs have exacerbated KTM's financial commitments and at the same time have reduced consumer demand.

TURN FOR THE WORSE

KTM's fall from economic grace is in sharp contrast to the company's meteoric growth over the past three decades since the brand first suffered bankruptcy back in 1990. The ensuing restructure saw Austrian businessman and entrepreneur Stefan Pierer enter the picture as part of a consortium that purchased the remains of the brand.

The re-born KTM subsequently produced 6000 motorcycles in 1992, before relentlessly growing over the years to produce more than 380,000 units in 2023. Along the way the KTM Group grew to be Europe's largest motorcycle manufacturer with a workforce of more than 6000 employees and the brand riding the wave of success of 13 years of consecutive record sales up until 2023.

KTM's survival now hinges on reducing the company's debt as fast as possible, with PMG already putting up for sale its 50.1 per cent stake in Italian motorcycle brand MV Agusta. At this time, however, there has been no word of the group selling the Husqvarna or GasGas brands.

Cost controls are already impacting KTM's racing activities, with the brand's significant expenditure on MotoGP racing set to be reduced this year before being stopped entirely in 2026. The company's Husqvarna and GasGas efforts were cut from the recent Dakar Rally, with only KTM featuring as a factory effort in the event.

It is expected production of motorcycles at KTM's Austrian factories will be halted for one to two months, while plans are being explored to move some production to less expensive locations.

Outside investment is also being sought by a range of global financial experts, with Indian brand Bajaj rumoured to be set to increase — and at the same time protect — its already sizeable investment in the Austrian concern. Meanwhile, Chinese brand CFMOTO, which is also a KTM partner, is being courted as well.

For now it's a game of high finance being played on an orange economic chess board as the motorcycle world awaits news of the survival — or otherwise — of KTM. Stay tuned!

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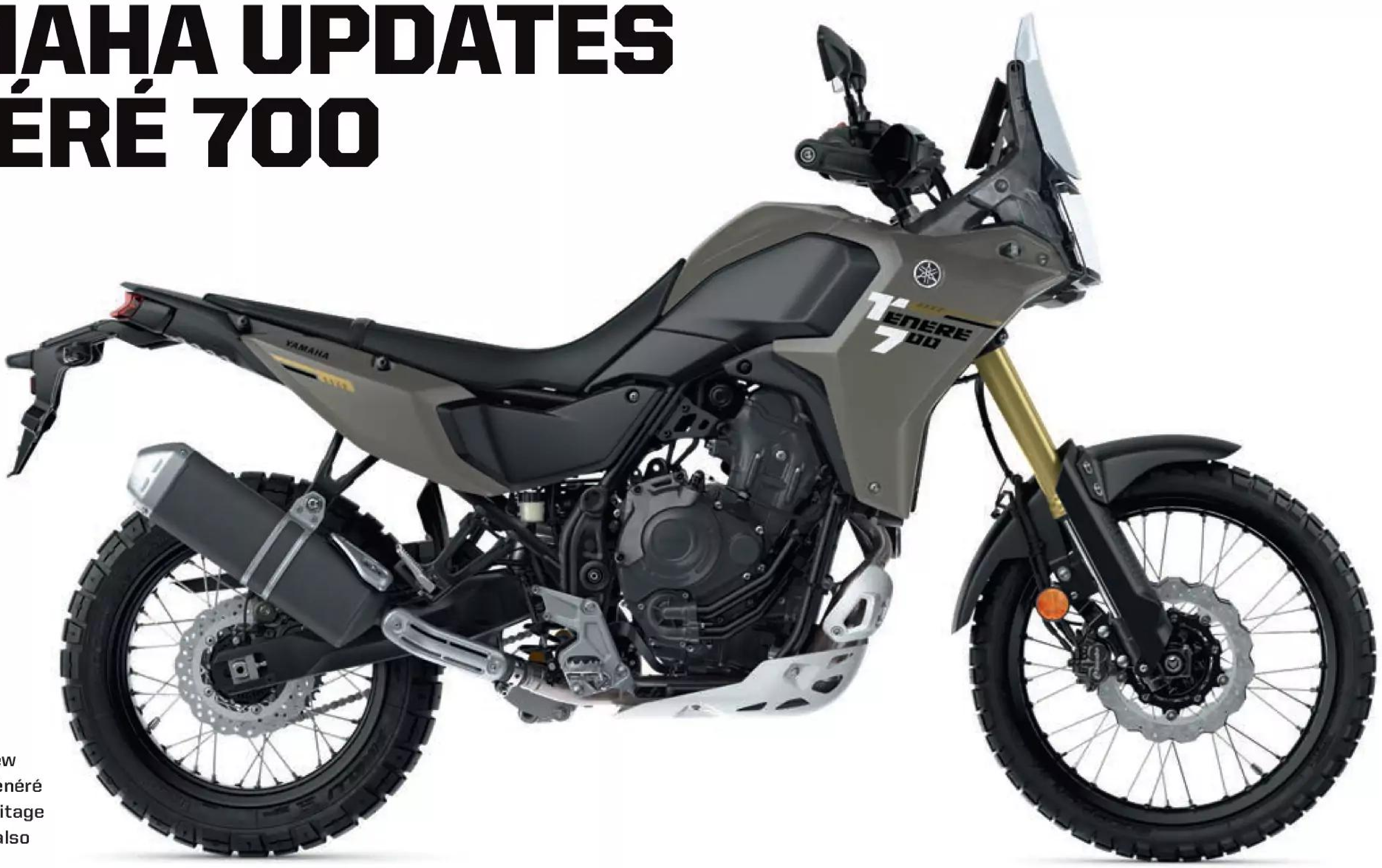


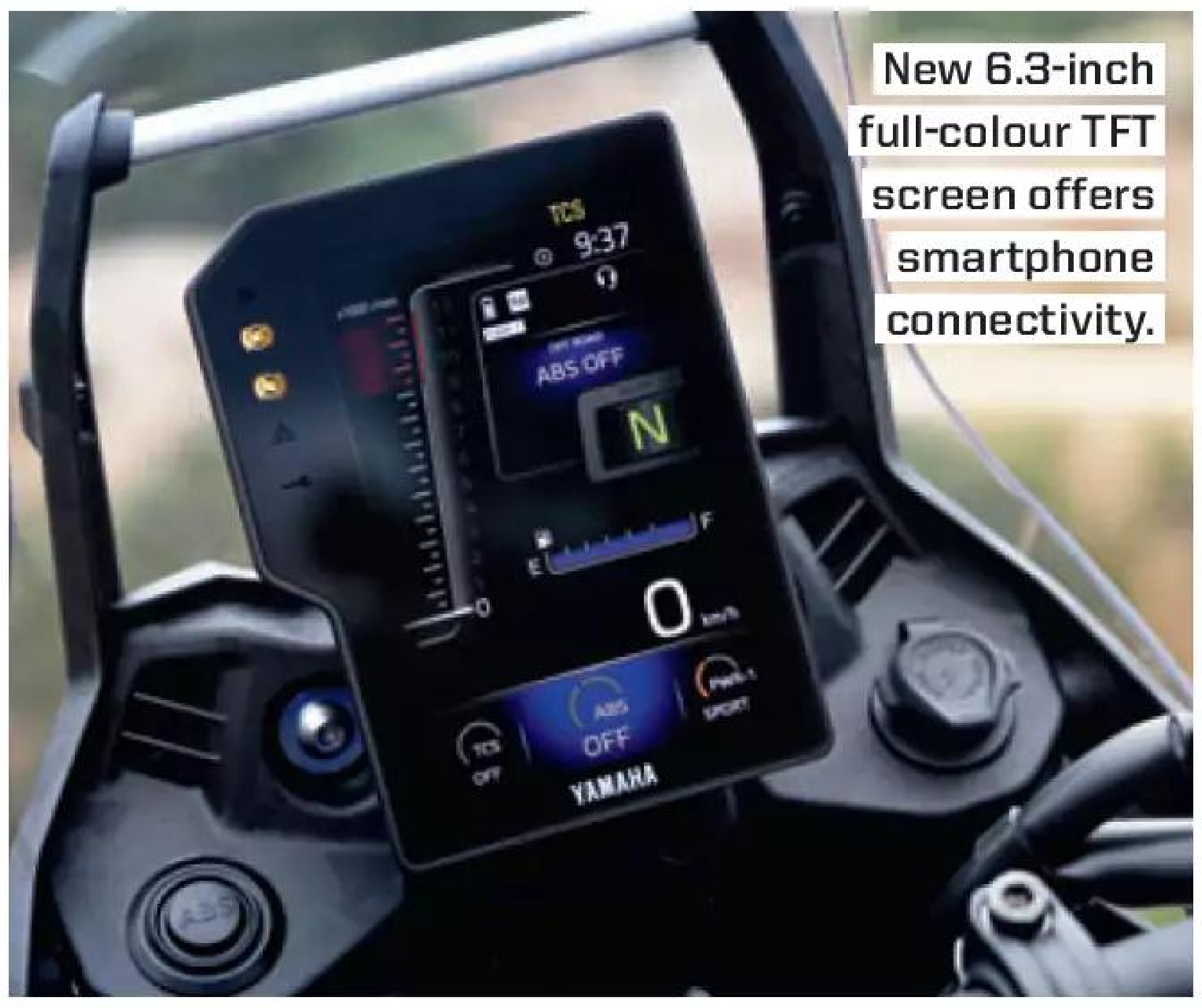
Frozen titanium is a new colour for the latest Ténéré 700. Icon blue and heritage sky blue versions will also make it down under.

Yamaha has taken the wraps off the 2025-model Tenere 700 — and the new bike boasts some solid updates.

First and foremost, the 16-litre fuel tank has been reshaped and shifted forward and downward to improve the bike's C-O-G and reduce the top-heavy feel. There's also a new one-piece rally seat, while up front the bodywork and quad LED headlights have come in for a restyle as well.

In the engine room, the T7 now boasts ride-by-wire YCC-T electronic throttle control and the rider has the choice of dual ride modes: Sport or Explorer. ABS and TCS can be switched off at the press of a button. The ABS has three settings, which can be selected through a dedicated button in the cockpit or using the bike's new switchgear via the 6.3-inch colour TFT dashboard. The new switchgear includes a five-direction joystick and new switchgear cubes.

A shorter air intake duct is claimed to boost torque, while gearbox tweaks deliver smoother shifting and a new clutch cover reduces contact with the rider's leg.



New 6.3-inch full-colour TFT screen offers smartphone connectivity.

The new T7 is also packing new suspension, with the 43mm forks gripped by updated triple clamps and featuring preload, rebound and compression damping adjustment and delivering 210mm wheel travel. An updated rear shock with remote adjuster has a new progressive linkage and controls 200mm of wheel travel.

In the chassis department there are subtle updates, including a stronger muffler bracket and luggage mounts, while the side stand switch has been redesigned and relocated. 10mm-wider footpegs are now fitted and there are new full-wrap plastic handguards. Ground clearance is 240mm, while seat height remains at 875mm.

16-litre fuel cell, bodywork and headlights have all been restyled.

Updated switchgear to control the T7's much-updated electronics.

The new T7 is available in Australia in icon blue, frozen titanium and heritage sky blue colours, and Yamaha Europe details the new bike as weighing in at 208kg wet (including full oil and fuel tank).

Pricing and delivery details of the T7 were yet to be announced as we go to press, so for all latest details, see your local Yamaha dealer. **www.yamaha-motor.com.au**

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HONDA'S NX500 SOFT-ROADER

Honda's NX model designation is back with the new NX500, which in a previous life was known as the CB500X.

Honda's NX model designation is back and means 'New X-over', which aptly fits the new NX500 soft-roader, a bike that in previous times was known as the CB500X.

Honda says the new NX500 is fun on winding roads, fun on gravel trails and is ready to go the distance. It's powered by a lively 471cc twin-cylinder engine with assist/slipper clutch that is also shared with Honda's CB500 Hornet and CBR500R road bikes.

The NX runs 19/17-inch cast aluminium wheels and features a Showa 41mm separate function fork and shock with 135mm wheel travel.

A new five-inch full-colour TFT screen includes Honda Roadsync connectivity for on-screen turn-by-turn navigation and access to other smartphone functions.

A new LED headlight and tail light are part of the package along with a redesigned windscreen, while vital stats include a seat height of 834mm, fuel capacity of 17.5 litres and kerb weight of 196kg.

Priced at $10,199 ride-away, the NX500 is available in a choice of red or white colours.

motorcycles.honda.com.au

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BMW FIRES 450cc SHOT

BMW's concept model F 450 GS gets put through its paces. Expect it to arrive in Australian showrooms later this year.

We've been saying for months now that the 450cc-or-so category of adventure bikes is all set to explode on the back of the massive popularity of the new CFMOTO 450 MT and Royal Enfield's Himalayan 450.

After KTM recently unveiled its 390 Adventure R, BMW has now stepped up to the plate, using the EICMA Show in Italy late last year to pull the wraps off it's new F 450 GS — and what a spunky little beast it is too, even if the bike shown in Milan was a concept model.

Decked out in BMW's Trophy livery of red, white and blue, the F 450 GS show bike certainly looked 'production enough' to get throngs of small-bore ADVers drooling into their beers. The BMW 450 is powered by a newly developed twin-cylinder engine that puts out around 48hp, while 19/17-inch wheels adorned the bike on show in Milan. There's a 6.5-inch TFT display and BMW Motorrad ABS Pro is also fitted. Weight is expected to be around 175kg.

Revealing the bike, BMW Product Manager Sepp Machler said: "What was particularly important to us in the development of the new BMW Concept F 450 GS was to achieve the best handling for this segment and combine it with strong performance and optimal accessibility. The riding pleasure on-road and off-road is a top priority for this bike."

Meanwhile, BMW's Head of Motorrad Design, Alexander Buckan, added: "This bike carries the characteristic DNA of the GS family. We have succeeded in designing the Concept model with the sporty dynamic appeal of our large off-road icon in a particularly compact form."

As to just how close the Concept model will be to the eventual production version, BMW Vehicle Project Manager Johann Simon said: "No compromises, for sure! Following the very sporty off-road focus of the Concept model, we will implement the bike as close as possible to the concept. We will only adjust the seat height for better accessibility and easier handling. As an alternative to the cross-poke wheels, lightweight but high-strength cast aluminium wheels in the same dimensions are also conceivable."

If BMW keep the F 450 GS true to the brief of the concept model, demand will surely be high.

There's no surprise BMW Motorrad Australia is already fielding enquiries about the new F 450 GS, and the production model is anticipated to hit Australian dealers some time later this year ... so stay tuned!

www.bmw.motorrad.com.au

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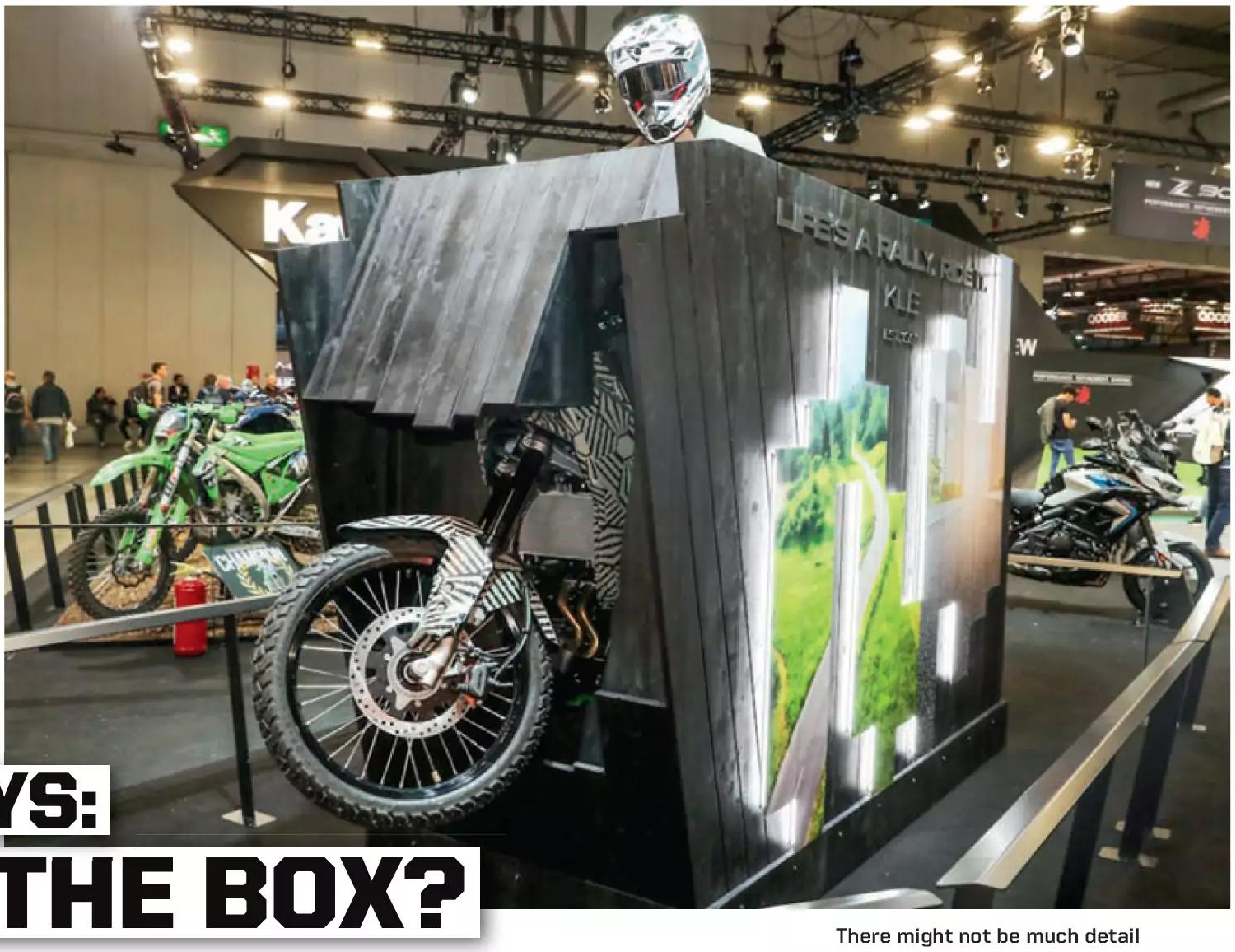

There might not be much detail to see, but the bike in a box suggests Kawasaki is all set to resurrect the KLE dual-sport legend.

KAWASAKI SAYS: WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

So how do you display a new bike at the world's biggest bike show when you don't actually have a new bike to display? If you're Kawasaki, you take a great big box, cut a hole in the front of it, then hang the front end of the prototype bike out of it and whack great big logos over the box that say: "Life's a rally. Ride it! KLE Kawasaki."

And that's exactly what Kawasaki did at the EICMA Show in Italy late last year.

From what could be seen of the bike, it had long-travel front suspension, a 21-inch front wheel, large single front disc, dual header pipes and seemingly rally-style bodywork that was decked out in a camo finish. While Kawasaki remained tight-lipped about details of the bike, devout Team Green fans will well remember the KLE500 of years gone by, which was produced during the 1990s and featured a 498cc parallel twin-cylinder engine wrapped in a dual-sport chassis and bodywork.

It's fair to say the old KLE never set the world on fire, but here's hoping the bike in the box is a way more modern take on a small-capacity ADV machine that will provide a much-needed boost to Kawasaki's ADV range. Stay tuned!

www.kawasaki.com.au

LEATT'S NEW ADV HELMETS

Leatt has launched its first motorcycle adventure helmets with the recent unveiling of the 9.5 Carbon and 8.5 models. The new helmets mark a significant expansion for the South African brand, completing its head-to-toe line-up for riders across all terrains.

The new Leatt helmets combine road and off-road elements to deliver the best of both worlds. A streamlined shape delivers smooth aerodynamics, while a wide eye port and peak visor is typical of off-road helmets. Plus, a set of Leatt 4.5 Velocity goggles are included in the kit with each model, alongside a photochromic shield, additional clear shield and Pinlock 120 XLT.

Available sizes are XS to XXL and a wide range of accessory cheek pad thicknesses are available to fine-tune the fit. The 9.5 Carbon is offered in a sleek black colour, while the 8.5 is available in multiple colour options. Leatt also offers a three-year Helmet Replacement Program for added peace of mind.

Leatt's 9.5 Carbon helmet kit is priced at $1399.99, while the 8.5 kit is priced at $1049.99. See your local Leatt dealer for full details.

www.leattmoto.com.au

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Let the Good Times Roll

KTM'S NEW MODEL RUSH

When is too much never enough! When it's the KTM 1390 Super Adventure R and it's pumping out a whopping 170 horsepower.

2024 might have finished with the KTM Group in all sorts of financial distress and ultimately entering into self-appointed administration, but that certainly didn't slow down the announcement of new-model bikes for 2025 — they just kept coming one after another.

In the ADV uber-tourer stakes, KTM first showed the 2025-model 1390 Super Adventure S, which is a road-biased adventure tourer featuring a new 1350cc engine (up from 1300cc previously) that punches out an eye-watering 170hp and 145Nm of torque. The new motor is loaded up with Camshift technology that is claimed to improve rideability at lower revs, increase peak performance, lower emissions and reduce fuel use.

The 1390 Super Adventure S also features WP semi-active suspension as well as KTM's all-new portrait-style eight-inch touchscreen dash, radar-enabled active cruise control, brake assistance, collision warning and distance warning. The bike's styling, bodywork, ergos, seat and windshield have also all been reworked.

KTM says the 1390 Super Adventure S is scheduled to hit Australian shores in May, but the even higher-tech EVO version will not be coming Down Under.

Of course, a new 1390 Super Adventure R is also coming down the gangplank, with KTM announcing the mighty beast will continue to be manufactured in Austria, not China or India.

As KTM's flagship off-road-biased ADV machine, the 1390 Super Adventure R is fitted with WP XPLOR suspension while running the same ground-pounding new 1350cc engine as the S model. The R also gets the new eight-inch vertically mounted touchscreen and much-updated bodywork and ergos.

Meanwhile, KTM's venerable 890 Adventure R is set to remain the mainstay of the Austrian brand's ADV range, but updates to the 2025 model are modest. There's a new connectivity unit fitted as standard along with new graphics.

The 890 continues to be powered by an 889cc parallel twin-cylinder engine that delivers 77kW of power and 100Nm of torque, while WP XPLOR components handle the suspension chores.

KTM says the new 890 Adventure R is scheduled to arrive in Australian showrooms in April.

Finally, while KTM has also debuted a new 990 Duke road-scorcher, there's no official news yet of the much-rumoured new 990 Adventure R.

For more details on KTM's 2025 models, see your local KTM dealer. **www.ktm.com**

KTM's Austrian-made 2025-model 890 Adventure R is due to arrive in Aussie showrooms in April.

Photo: H. Clancy
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STYLE
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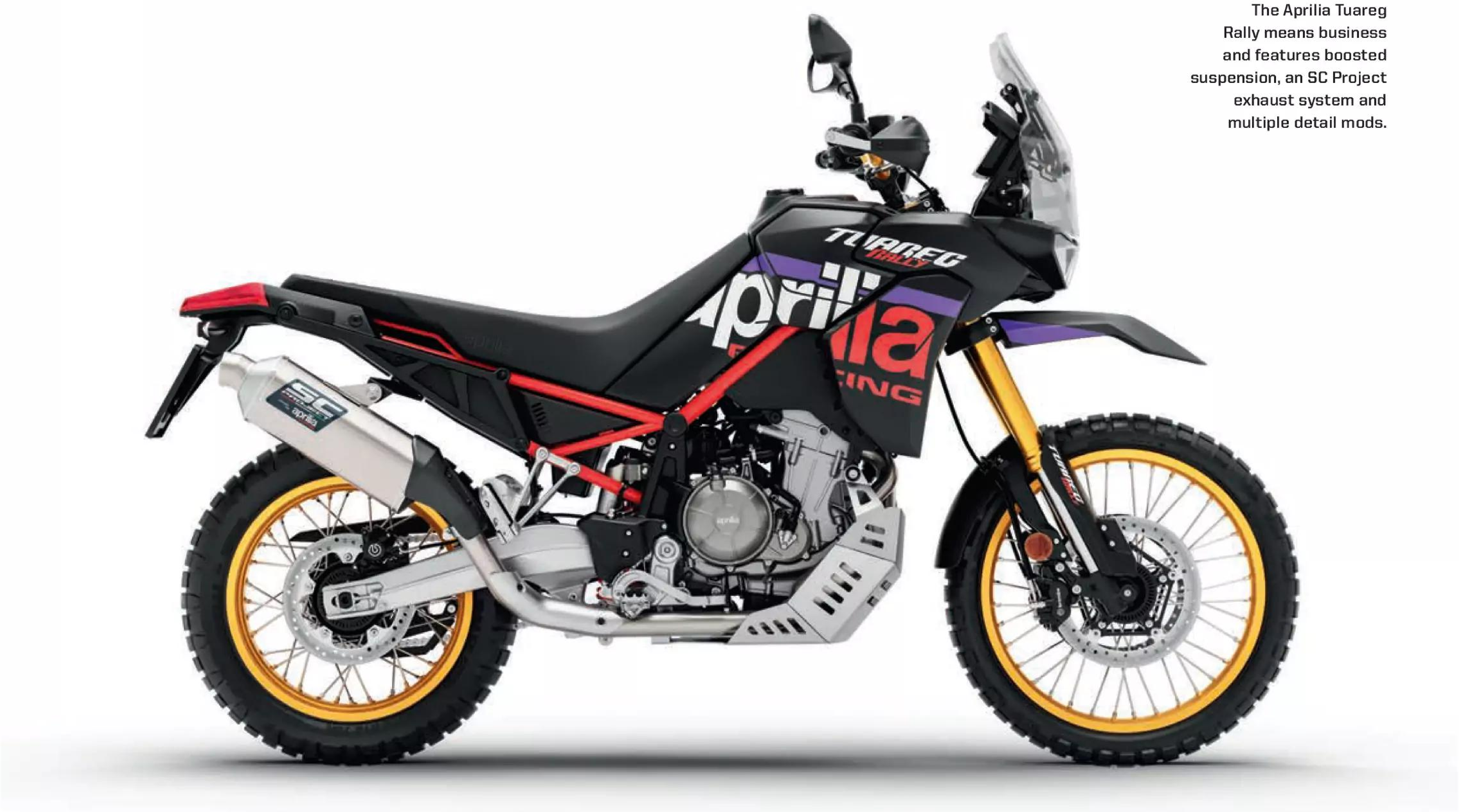
Congratulations on win number 20 and for painting the desert orange once again!

KTM.COM/RACING

KTM



The Aprilia Tuareg Rally means business and features boosted suspension, an SC Project exhaust system and multiple detail mods.

APRILIA TUAREG RALLY

Aprilia has pulled out all the stops with its Tuareg model, recently announcing the unveiling of a special Aprilia Tuareg Rally version which has been developed with the input of Aprilia Racing rider Jacopo Cerutti.

"It was fascinating to be involved in developing a production model like the new Tuareg Rally," Cerutti said. "The goal was to make it as similar as possible to the bike with which we won the Africa Eco Race, and I can say we succeeded!"

Standard features on the Tuareg Rally include a high front guard, thicker aluminium skid plate, sturdier handguards with metal backbones, new chain guide, larger sidestand base and 20mm taller seat.

Heavy-duty spoked wheels with high-strength forged aluminium rims are also included, while KYB suspension offers 240mm wheel travel, but with linear spring rates for a firmer suspension action and reduced static sag.

Specially developed engine mapping is also part of the Rally package, along with a dedicated SC Project exhaust system that's complete with titanium silencer and racing style end cap with generous 60mm outlet.

The wheel set and exhaust system have helped the Tuareg Rally tip the scales at just 199kg in running order, down from the 204kg weight of the standard Tuareg.

An unmistakable Rally race replica colour scheme completes the package.

The Aprilia Tuareg Rally is due to hit Australian showrooms around July alongside the 2025 Tuareg range, with the standard model scoring new 52mm throttle bodies (up from 48mm), a new rare-earth generator to reduce inertia and boost acceleration, and styling updates around the headlamp cluster. For the latest pricing and availability details, see your local Aprilia dealer.

www.aprilia.com

Look, it's the bike that Jacopo Cerutti built: the Aprilia Tuareg Rally.

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RACING

The new Ducati Multistrada V2 boasts a big cut in weight and an all-new engine in a major upgrade for 2025.

DUCATI MULTISTRADA V2

Ducati has pulled out all the stops with its Multistrada V2 and V2 S models for 2025, the renowned soft-roaders featuring major updates for the new year.

Headlining the upgrades is a massive 18kg of weight being sliced off the new models, to bring it in at a running weight of 199kg plus fuel for the V2 model, or 202kg for the V2 S with its semi-active suspension.

Powering the bike is Ducati's new V2 engine, which is an 890cc 90-degree V-twin with IVT variable intake valve timing that is extremely compact and lightweight, weighing in at just 54.9kg. The new motor delivers a healthy 115hp at 10,750rpm and produces 92Nm of torque at 8250rpm.

Five riding modes (sport, touring, urban, enduro and wet) are on offer in an engine management package that includes cornering ABS, Ducati Traction Control (DTC), Ducati Wheelie Control (DWC) and Engine Brake Control (EBC). Ride info is displayed via a choice of three Infomodes on a new five-inch TFT colour dashboard.

The engine is used as a stressed member in an all-new aluminium monocoque frame, which is mated to a steel trellis rear sub-frame and cast aluminium swingarm. Slim and narrow ergos have been a high priority for Ducati's engineers to "increase riding pleasure and the sense of control at high speeds".

A Marzocchi 45mm fork and Sachs shock handle the suspension chores, while the upspec Multistrada V2 S model boasts semi-active suspension with Ducati Skyhook Suspension electronic control. Suspension travel is 170mm front and rear.

Wheel sizes are 19-inch front and 17-inch rear, with spoked wheels available as an accessory. Brembo double 320mm front and single 265mm rear discs complete the braking chores.

Cruise control, USB socket on the dashboard and Ducati Brake Light EVO (which manages emergency flashing in sudden braking) are also standard features.

Priced from $26,100, the new Multistrada V2 will be available in Ducati Red, while buyers of the $29,200 Multistrada V2 S will have a choice of storm green or Ducati red colours. **www.ducati.com**

The Multistrada V2 S with semi-active Skyhook suspension will be available in a choice of storm green or Ducati red colours.

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Royal Enfield's new Bear 650 is loaded with stacks of retro scrambler style.

ROYAL ENFIELD'S BEAR 650

If you like a little scrambling in your adventures, take a look at Royal Enfield's new Bear 650: this thundering beast is packed with scrambler style and loaded with a 1960s soul!

The Bear 650 harks back to a time when a then 16-year-old rookie desert racer named Eddie Mulder — aka Fast Eddie — became the youngest rider to win the famed Big Bear Run desert race held in California's inhospitable Mojave Desert. Mulder shocked the desert racing fraternity to beat off 765 riders and capture the Big Bear Run win aboard a 500cc Royal Enfield Fury.

"When you got out on the track, the green flag dropped and the bullsh*t stopped," Eddie said, in an ethos that parallels Royal Enfield's development of the new Bear 650.

The new scrambler is powered by Royal Enfield's celebrated 650cc parallel twin motor from the Interceptor line-up and pumps out 47hp at 7250rpm and 56.5Nm of torque at 5150rpm to deliver a boost in mid-range torque compared to RE's other Twin models.

Showa suspension delivers 130mm front and 115mm rear-wheel travel, while ground clearance is 184mm, with 19/17-inch wheels fitted with dual-purpose tyres.

While packing a scrambler look and style that's inspired by its desert legacy, the Bear 650 is equipped with a Tripper dash, two-into-one exhaust, long bench seat and kicked-up rear frame loop.

Five colour schemes will be available, including a special Two Four Nine livery that pays homage to Eddie Mulder's iconic race-winning number.

The Two Four Nine model pays tribute to the race number of then 16-year-old Eddie Mulder, who won the Big Bear Run in California's Mojave Desert back in 1960.

Priced from $11,490 ride-away, the Bear 650 is on-sale now at Royal Enfield dealers. **www.royalenfield.com.au**

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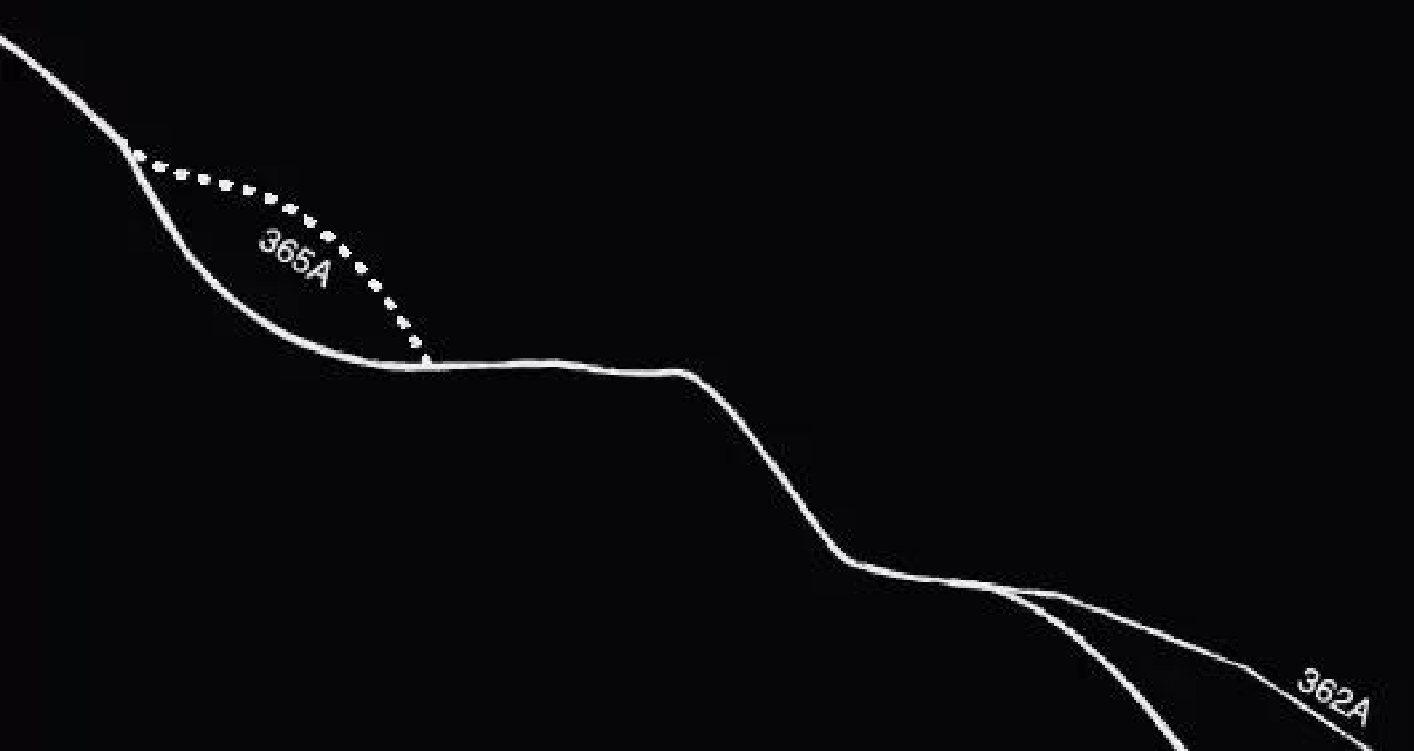

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A TALE OF TWO 450s

There's a small-bore revolution going on in the ADV world right now, and CFMOTO's 450 MT and Royal Enfield's Himalayan 450 are on a full-throttle charge and leading the way.

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY **ANDREW CLUBB**

One is from India and one is from China, but both the Royal Enfield Himalayan and CFMOTO 450 MT are rewriting the rulebook on which small-bore ADV bikes are being judged. And they are just the beginning of a new generation of small-bore ADV mounts.

Nugget (left) and Nosh try the Himalayan and 450 MT on for size.

Turn the ADV time machine back about 18 months or so and if I had said to you, "The top-selling adventure bikes in Australia will soon be a pair of 450s," you would have labelled me wacko and sent me to the asylum.

The Australian adventure bike landscape through the past decade or so has seen the sales stats well and truly dominated by big bikes. Bikes like Yamaha's Ténéré 700 and before it, Honda's Africa Twin. And before it, BMW's 1200/1250 GS and GS Adventure twins. And before that, the venerable Suzuki DR650 and Kawasaki's KLR650 have been consistently strong sellers.

Here in the land down under we love big adventure bikes for covering big distances, all loaded up and taking aim off the beaten track. Sure, riders have been going bush on small-bore bikes forever, but you would hardly label bikes like KTM's 390 Adventure, BMW's G 310 GS, Honda's CRF300 Rally or even Yamaha's WR250R as top sellers. They're out there, sure, but not in the high volume numbers of the T7, AT or big GSs.

Yet here we are kicking off the 2025 season and Mojo Motorcycles, the Australian distributor of CFMOTO, has announced they sold more than 1000 450 MTs since the bike's arrival in Australia in the second quarter of last year. And they've got even more customer orders to fill, just as soon as they can land a few more container-loads of the much acclaimed 450cc twin-cylinder Chinese ADVer.

Meanwhile, across the other side of Melbourne at the head office of Urban Moto Imports, the Australian distributor of Royal Enfield, there were plenty of pats on the back as 2024 wrapped up with continuing solid sales for the all-new Himalayan 450 thumper. UMI don't release their sales stats, but a little showroom skulduggery on our part suggests that sales of the Himi 450 are also well on the way to cracking 1000 units since the bike's arrival in Oz a year ago.

Fist pumps all round! 'These 450s are damn fun to ride!'

The sales success of both the 450 MT and the Himalayan 450 graphically indicate that there's a real changing of the guard going on in adventure land right now. The market's cooling on big bikes with big tech and big-ticket prices, and CFMOTO and Royal Enfield have read the landscape perfectly and timed the arrival of their new-generation 450s with pinpoint accuracy.

Talk about hitting a new bike sales home run — they've smashed it out of the park.

WHY IS THIS SO?

Let's not beat about the bush: money talks. Always has, always will. Both the 450 MT and the Himalayan have been rolling off the showroom floor for less than $10,000 on-road. That's a bloody cheap ticket to adventure. But the thing is, plenty of bikes are cheap, but to sell in high volume, they have to be bikes that riders want. At $6790 ride-away, Suzuki's V-Strom 250SX is outrageously cheap for a brand-new adventure bike, but you won't see it rolling off the showroom floor in anywhere near the numbers of the 450 MT and Himalayan.

At a time when everything in our lives is getting more expensive, and purchases of big-ticket recreational items like adventure bikes are getting harder and harder to first of all justify to yourself, let alone the missus, and then to actually have the readies or the borrowings to achieve, CFMOTO and Royal Enfield have turned the science of ADV economics on its ear.

Of course, the 450 MT and the Himalayan are manufactured in China and India

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LEATTMOTO.COM.AU

When the going gets tough in Swampville, at least these bikes can be lifted up solo. Nugget lifts while Nosh sniggers.

THE STAND-OUT MOMENT OF CARNAGE CAME WHEN NUGGET SLAMMED INTO A SUBMERGED SLAB OF SANDSTONE.

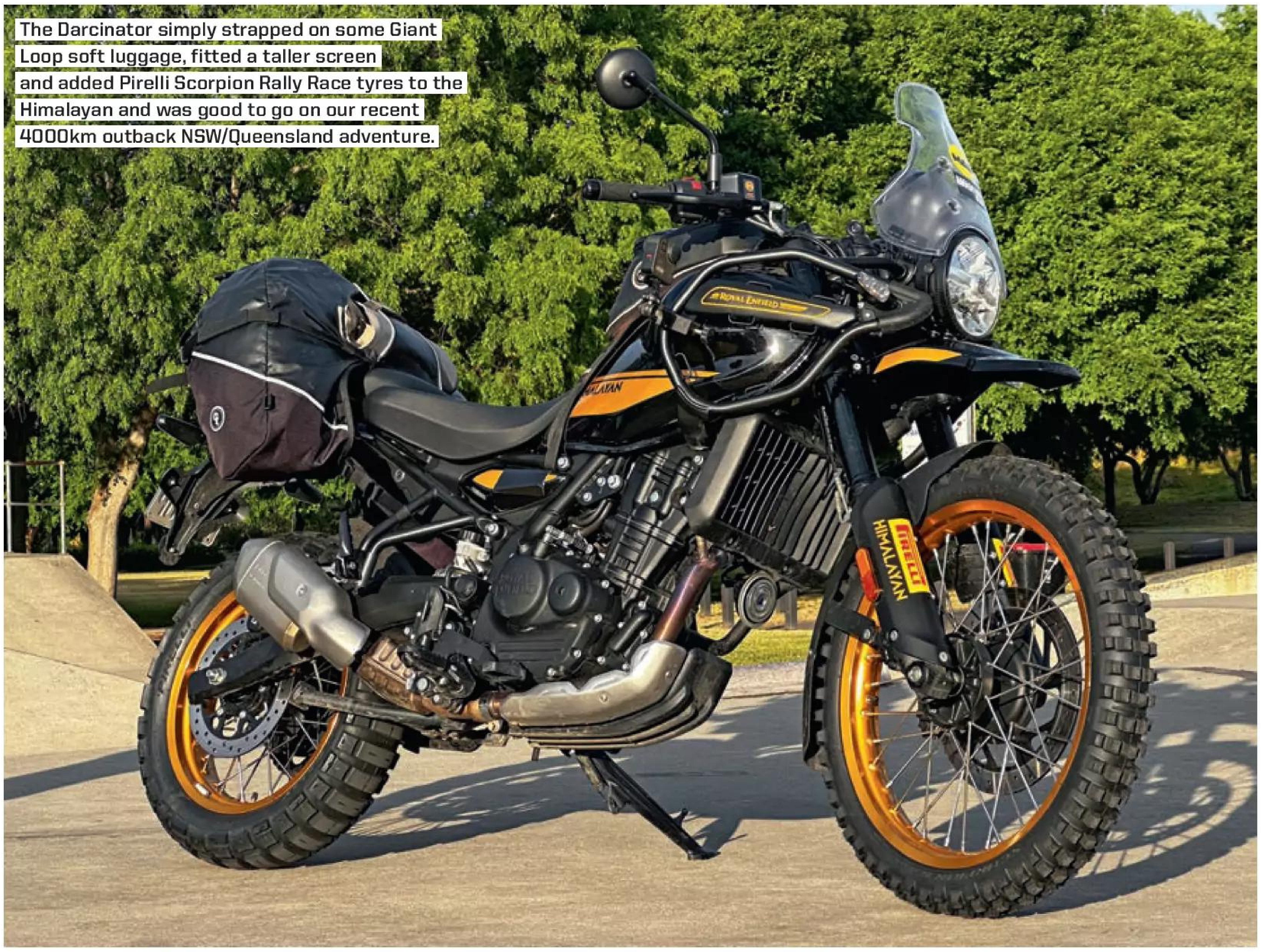
respectively, where labour and production costs are markedly lower than in Japan and certainly Europe. But CFMOTO and Royal Enfield have also turned what was once the stigma of a 'Made in China' or 'Made in India' label on its ear, too. Their bikes are certainly way better designed and manufactured nowadays than they were a decade ago, and better again than they were even a couple of years ago.

And let's face it: Australian ADV riders can be a pretty prickly bunch. If the 450 MT and the Himalayan didn't cut the mustard in terms of quality of manufacture, performance and price, precious few Aussies would go near them.

CHALK & CHEESE

What we find especially interesting about the success of the 450 MT and the Himalayan is the way each brand has tackled the project of designing a top-selling 450cc adventure bike. They're both 450s, but that's about all they have in common.

Let's start with the Himalayan 450, which Royal Enfield described as an 'evolution' of the original Himalayan 411. But after our first ride on the 450 at the bike's world launch in the Himalayas — yeah, those Himalayas! — we labelled it more a 'revolution' than simply an 'evolution'. Royal Enfield started with a clean slate and fitted their brand-new Sherpa water-cooled single-cylinder four-stroke engine into an all-new chassis and suspension set-up and wrapped it all in a details package that holds its own in the modern era — as opposed to the old



The Darcinator simply strapped on some Giant Loop soft luggage, fitted a taller screen and added Pirelli Scorpion Rally Race tyres to the Himalayan and was good to go on our recent 4000km outback NSW/Queensland adventure.

This 450 MT has been getting the Project Bike treatment in AAB and on MAD-TV, and we've been loving racking up the miles on it.

411 that was more like something from the prehistoric era.

More power, more suspension, more handling and more detail fitments indicate the seriousness with which Royal Enfield took the development of the Himalayan 450. But the thing is, while the 450 is all-new, it still pays perfect homage to the ethos of the original 411 as an eminently capable and unbustable overland tourer. The 450 has the 'mountain conquering cache' that the 411 became globally renowned for, and it does everything the 411 did but does it so much better. You bet those legions of Himalayan 411 fans — and there's a lot of them, not just here in Oz but all around the world — have all been itching to upgrade to the new 450. No surprise then that the new Himalayan has been selling like hotcakes, or should we say papadums.

CHINESE BANQUET

Meanwhile, in the Land of the People's Republic, CFMOTO's quest for global domination is clicking gears and roosting. The brand has successfully entrenched itself as a 'global player' manufacturer of UTVs and side-by-sides, while the 450 MT is now busting down the doors for the Chinese marquee in the motorcycle industry.

Yes, CFMOTO have been making motorcycles for years, but the 450 MT is a truly landmark model for the brand that is going to give CFMOTO two-wheeled global acceptance like it has never experienced before. Adventure bike riding continues to be the most popular segment of motorcycling in markets around the world and right now the 450 MT is white hot. It's the bike on so many riders' minds. It's different to anything else in the market and it's priced sharper than anything else in the market, yet it doesn't compromise on specification or performance.

As for quality of manufacture, as we said earlier, forget that old Made in China stigma because the 450 MT is the most mainstream Chinese ADV bike in the world right now. It's powered by a twin-cylinder engine — and that fact alone sets it apart from the pack — it boasts pleasing rally styling and it comes loaded with so many performance and detail features that you have to do a double-take when they tell you the price. CFMOTO has really nailed the 450 MT and plenty of riders, not to mention rival manufacturers, are sitting up and taking notice.

IT'S A SMALL WORLD

Given we have a CFMOTO 450 MT in the AAB project bike fleet, and the Darcinator has a Himalayan 450 on the MAD-TV project bike line-up, we've had plenty of time in the saddle and racked up stacks of kilometres to understand why these two bikes have been so popular with Aussie ADVers.

Both bikes are cheap, we've said that over and over, and they both perform well for 450s. They're fun to ride, easy to live with and will cover long-distance highway miles capably, while also being ready to plunder the undergrowth should you so desire.

You didn't want to do this on the old Himalayan 411!
The new 450 represents a major upgrade for Royal Enfield.

It didn't take long for Nosh to get fully comfortable on the CFMOTO and start pushing it off-road.

BOTH BIKES HANDLED EVERYTHING THAT WAS THROWN AT THEM ON THAT DAY IN THE WATAGANS.

While neither bike could be described as light for a 450 — claimed dry weights are 175kg for the CFMOTO and 181kg for the Royal Enfield — each are small enough in stature and carry their weight low enough that they are entirely manageable when the going gets tough and technical. And we surely proved that on a recent session in the Watagan forests north of Sydney, when we threw the Darcinator's MAD-TV co-pilots Nugget and Nosh on the bikes for a real-world review of the new 450s.

We'd actually had them out on the bikes all day, on what was proving to be a pretty big day, and late in the arvo Dave steered us onto an overgrown fire trail, then barked: "You blokes all go in front, I'm gonna shoot helmet cam from the back!"

Now, we should have smelled a set-up miles away, but no, we fell for it hook, line and sinker. Just a couple of hundred metres later the trail fast degenerated into Swampville, one steaming, oozy, gloopy Watagan mud-hole after another, with man-eating lantana lining each side of the handlebar-width track.

"You b*st*rd, Darcy!" we all screamed in unison as the sinister filmmaker burned a stack of memory cards while greedily recording the carnage. And the stand-out moment of carnage came when Nugget, whilst astride the Himalayan, ploughed into a bog-hole and promptly slammed into a submerged slab of sandstone with a vertical face, which brought him to an immediate stop and plunged him sideways into the murky mire — but he thankfully kept his head above water … just.

DIFFERENT STROKES

We floundered in Swampville for a couple of hours, then once we emerged back onto dry, firm ground, Dave stuck his camera in

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THESE BIKES ARE FAST CHANGING PEOPLE'S OPINIONS ON THE VERY CONCEPT OF RIDING A SMALL-BORE ADVENTURE BIKE.

Both 450s are so much fun to ride in the bush.

the faces of Nosh and Nugget to get their impressions of the bikes. It was clear Nugget was a real fan of the Himalayan, while Nosh was simply enraptured with the CFMOTO. Which is the way things sometime play out. Different riders will have different opinions; Darcy is a big fan of the Royal Enfield, but I'm more toey for the 450 MT.

The way I sum these two bikes up is that the Himalayan is more an adventure trail bike, while the CFMOTO is more an adventure touring bike. However, I must stress, each bike crosses those definitions to move deep into the territory of the other. Nugget, like Darcy, is a keenly off-road-biased adventure rider, while Nosh is like me and seemingly more stoked on adventure touring riding.

But both bikes handled everything that was thrown at them on that day in the Watagans, and we all agreed that had we been riding big-bore multi-cylinder adventure bikes, we'd still be buried deep in Swampville trying to drag the bikes out.

Have a hunt around on Dave's MAD-TV channel on YouTube to view the film from that ride and you'll see we had a heap of fun on a couple of small-bore adventure bikes that are fast changing people's opinions on the very concept of riding a small-bore adventure bike. Good things can come in small packages.

Simply surviving Darcy's plunge into Swampville in the Watagans was worth talking about!

COMING NEXT

With Royal Enfield and CFMOTO kicking down the door, you bet other brands will fast start to follow the small-bore adventure bike bandwagon.

KTM — if it doesn't get liquidated by its creditors in the meantime! — is set to be first cab off the rank, with its new 390 Adventure R and 390 Enduro duo all set to roll in coming months. The make-or-break factor for the 390 is sure to be its price tag: KTM needs to bring it in close to the pricing of the Himalayan and the 450 MT. And they should be able to, given the 390s are being manufactured in India by KTM partner Bajaj.

BMW is also getting in on the small-bore action, displaying a brand-new F 450 GS Concept at the EICMA Show in Italy late last year, which should be ready to go late this year as a 2026 model. The 450 GS looked and sounded a treat at the show, and while clearly being promoted as off-road biased, we were surprised to the see the concept bike fitted with 19/17-inch wheels. Curious.

Another 450 that looks set to finally make it onto the Australian market is the Kove 450, which comes fair and square from the rally racing end of the ADV spectrum. The Kove has been dubbed a Chinese-made, street-legal Dakar racer replica, and while that recipe will tickle the fancy of many an Aussie ADVer who has long dreamt of the unicorn, we will have to wait and see at what price point it hits local showrooms if/when it arrives.

As for the Japanese brands, well, the sound of crickets continues. That amazes us, as we're sure it does you too. Surely there's a new-generation Transalp 500, Kawasaki KLE500 or Ténéré 450 in the wind ... surely! **AAB**

learn more
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Embark on unforgettable journeys with the CFMOTO 450MT, a powerful and versatile adventure touring motorcycle designed to explore the world beyond boundaries.

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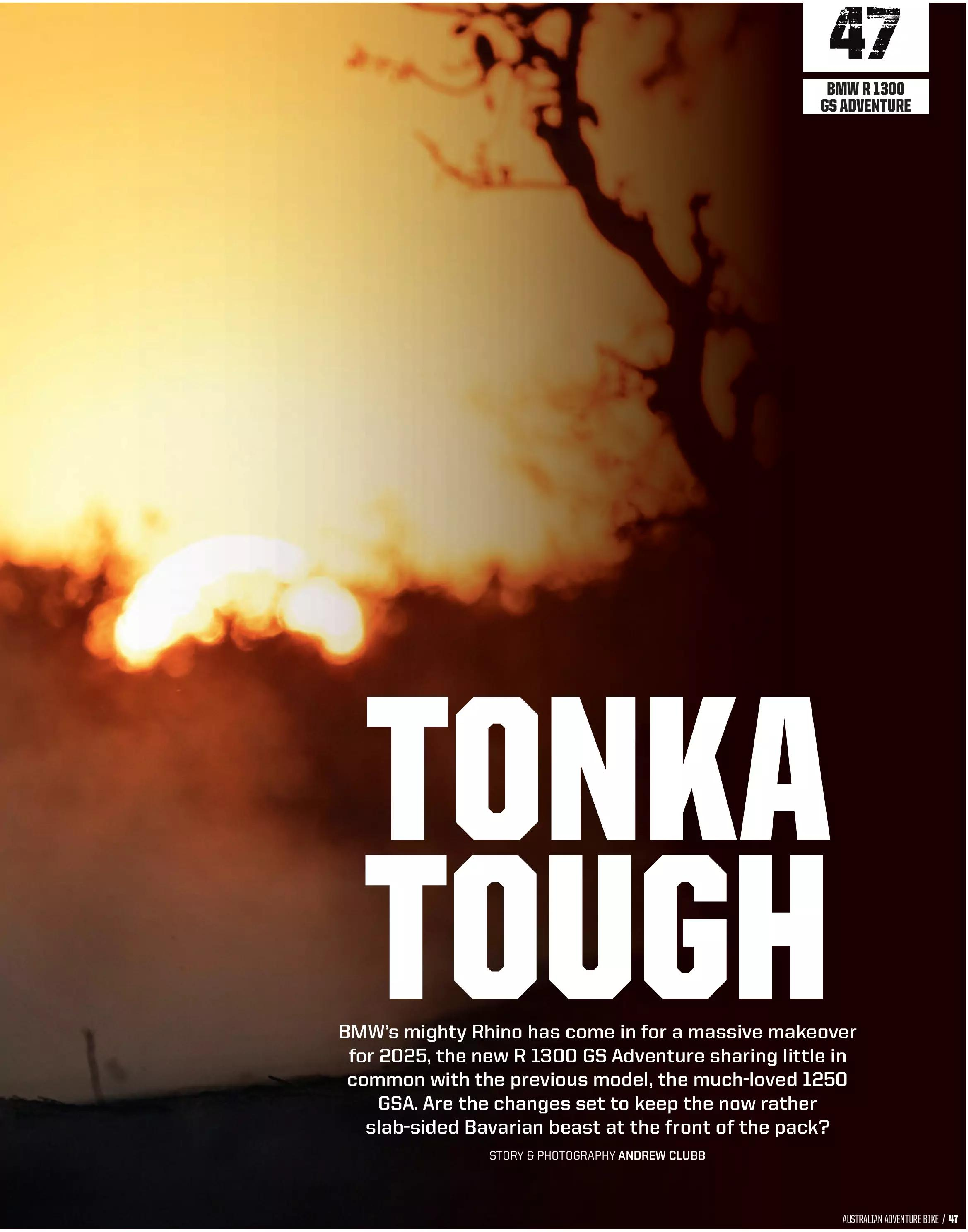
CFMOTO

BMW's R 1300 GS Adventure is tailor-made for riding off into the sunset and all the way back again. And then get set to repeat it again the next day. If you want to cover big, big miles, climb aboard. Photo: BMW Motorrad.



TONKA TOUGH

BMW's mighty Rhino has come in for a massive makeover for 2025, the new R 1300 GS Adventure sharing little in common with the previous model, the much-loved 1250 GSA. Are the changes set to keep the now rather slab-sided Bavarian beast at the front of the pack?

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY **ANDREW CLUBB**

R 1300 GSA Triple Black variant (left) meets Trophy X version. In typical BMW fashion, there's a stack of model variants and BMW performance packs and genuine accessories to choose from when ordering your BMW.

What was your reaction when you first set eyes on pictures of BMW's new R 1300 GS Adventure? I sure remember mine: I went, "What the … are they serious?!" and promptly choked on my morning Corn Flakes. The new 1300 GSA had a face that only a mother could love.

And then a photo of a BMW designer working on a clay model of 'that fuel tank' hit my Inbox and instantly I figured they had to be taking the piss. Surely. That designer was either getting paid by the hour, or more likely getting paid by the kilo, because I had never, ever seen so much clay used in the modelling of a motorcycle fuel tank. It didn't just look huge — it looked absolutely ginormous.

IN REAL LIFE

Fast-forward the time machine seven months or so and the Darcinator and I walk into the gleaming showroom of Procycles BMW at Hornsby on the north side of Sydney. Inside are two shiny-new R 1300 GS Adventure test bikes with our names on them. There's a Trophy X for Dave, while a luscious Triple Black is earmarked for yours truly.

Our first words are: "Hell, they're big. Real bloody big." So let's get that elephant — or should I say Rhino? — out of the room right away. Fully fuelled, the new GSA tips the scales at 269kg ready to roll.

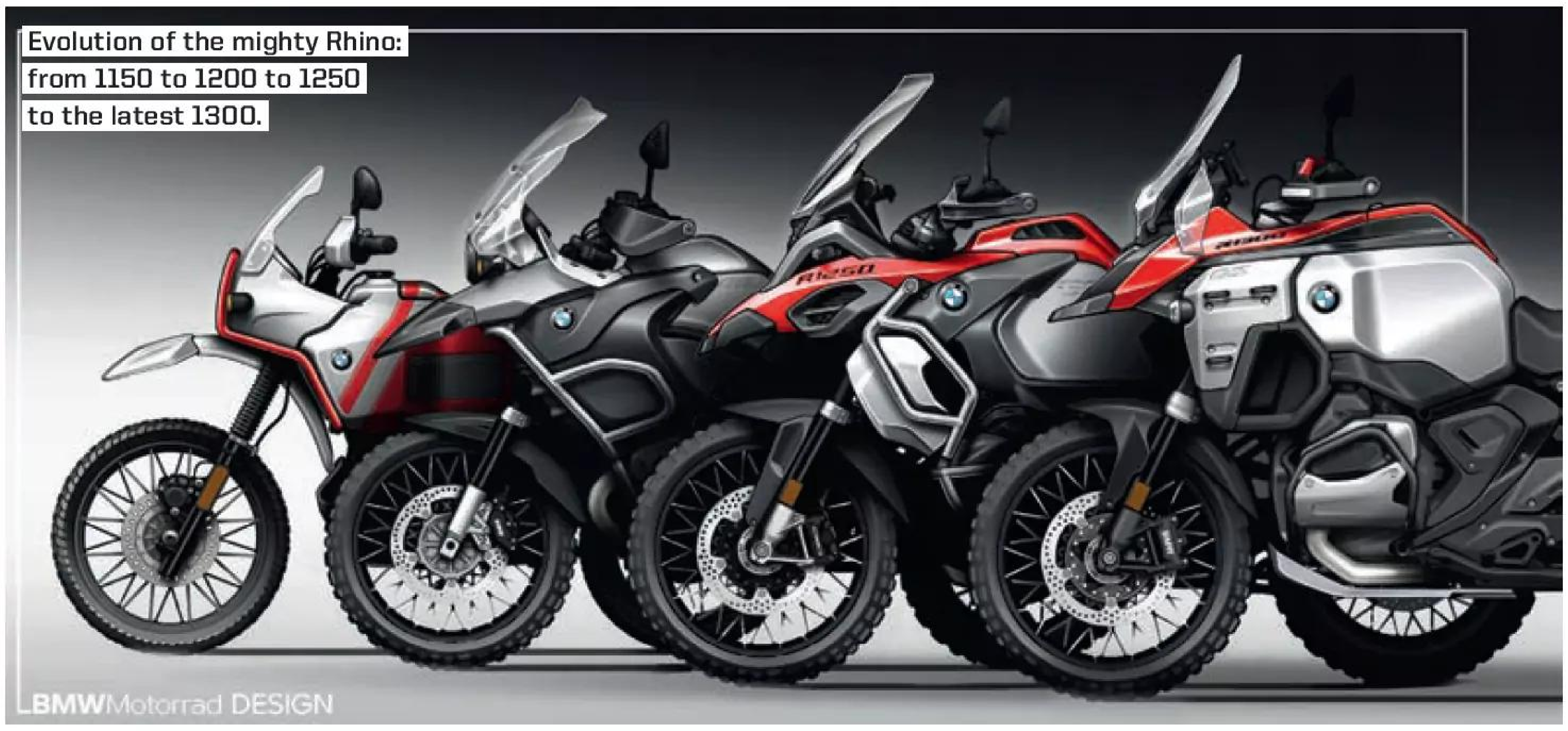
And that slab-sided 30-litre fuel tank is indeed massive. It's every bit as big as it looks in photos. And the tank is wide when you climb aboard, but actually not quite as wide as the new engine crash bars, which have extra 'wings' that actually stretch them out to the same width as the handlebars. Lane splitting on this beast will demand some precision.

Then we spotted the seat height of the Trophy X, which was fitted with a flat rally seat that puts the perch at a lofty 915mm. Darcy climbed aboard and could barely touch the deck. Good luck with that, son!

The Triple Black, meantime, sat way lower, thanks to a stepped two-piece seat and Adaptive Vehicle Height Control, which can lower the seat height to 820mm in the Low setting as you come to a standstill. It's a $795 option, but let me tell you, I fast came to love it. Being able to confidently reach the deck is a boon on a bike this big and bulky.

After a tech briefing by the Procycles staff — and yes, there's a lot of tech to come to grips with — we fired the big boxers into life and were off for a little Rhino taming.

Evolution of the mighty Rhino: from 1150 to 1200 to 1250 to the latest 1300.



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The Darcinator launches the Trophy X and aims for the sky. If you're going to push the GSA hard off-road, be sure to respect the sheer bulk and weight of the beast.

01

02

THE TROPHY X HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE MORE OFF-ROAD-BIASED VARIANT IN BMW'S GSA LINE-UP.

RHINO REVISITED

My last romp in the wild with a Rhino was back in 2021 at the BMW GS Safari event in far north Queensland. I flew into Cairns and joined the Safari mid-way through, meaning my first day in the saddle coincided with a wet and greasy run through Black Mountain up in the ranges near Kuranda. Now, did I say it was greasy? Yeah, wet red clay greasy, which is right up there with the worst kind of greasy you can get. Gulp.

But you know what, I was shocked by just how well the 1250 GSA handled the conditions. Let the beast find its way, keep your body weight over the front end, no sudden movements and go with the flow. The big Bavarian just worked. Until I hit Emmagen Creek just north of Cape Trib the next day and traction control was still active, and I had to fumble my way through the watery rock farm like a muppet. Oops.

Riding the 1300 GSA, the new Rhino felt the same in many ways but different in others. The first difference is the bike's ergos, as I felt I was sitting more 'on' the 1300, whereas I remember feeling more 'in' the 1250. And the Trophy X with the high and flat rally seat only exacerbated that feeling.

The feel of the 1300's tank between your legs/knees, and the view you have of the front of the tank and around the dash and steering head, is quite different to the 1250. To me the new bike felt bigger around the front end, and the accessory BMW tank bag fitted to the bike just rammed home that feeling. It's a massive tank bag, which can be really practical when you want to cart around a heap of bits and pieces that you want easy access to, but the tank bag sure impacted the ergos. It made it tough to get your body and your weight fully forward when standing, and that's critical to riding this bike confidently in the dirt.

A couple of times over the test I was caught out by the front end wanting to push wide on gravel forest road corners that had crappy camber, and once again in a sandy section, and I reckon that having a near full fuel load and my not being forward enough to plant that 19-inch front wheel were the culprits. A smaller tank bag would be the go, for sure.

And while we're on the subject of the tank, how convenient are the new tank bag mounting points built into the back and front sides of the 30-litre fuel cell? Just hook your bags on and go, no straps — too easy.

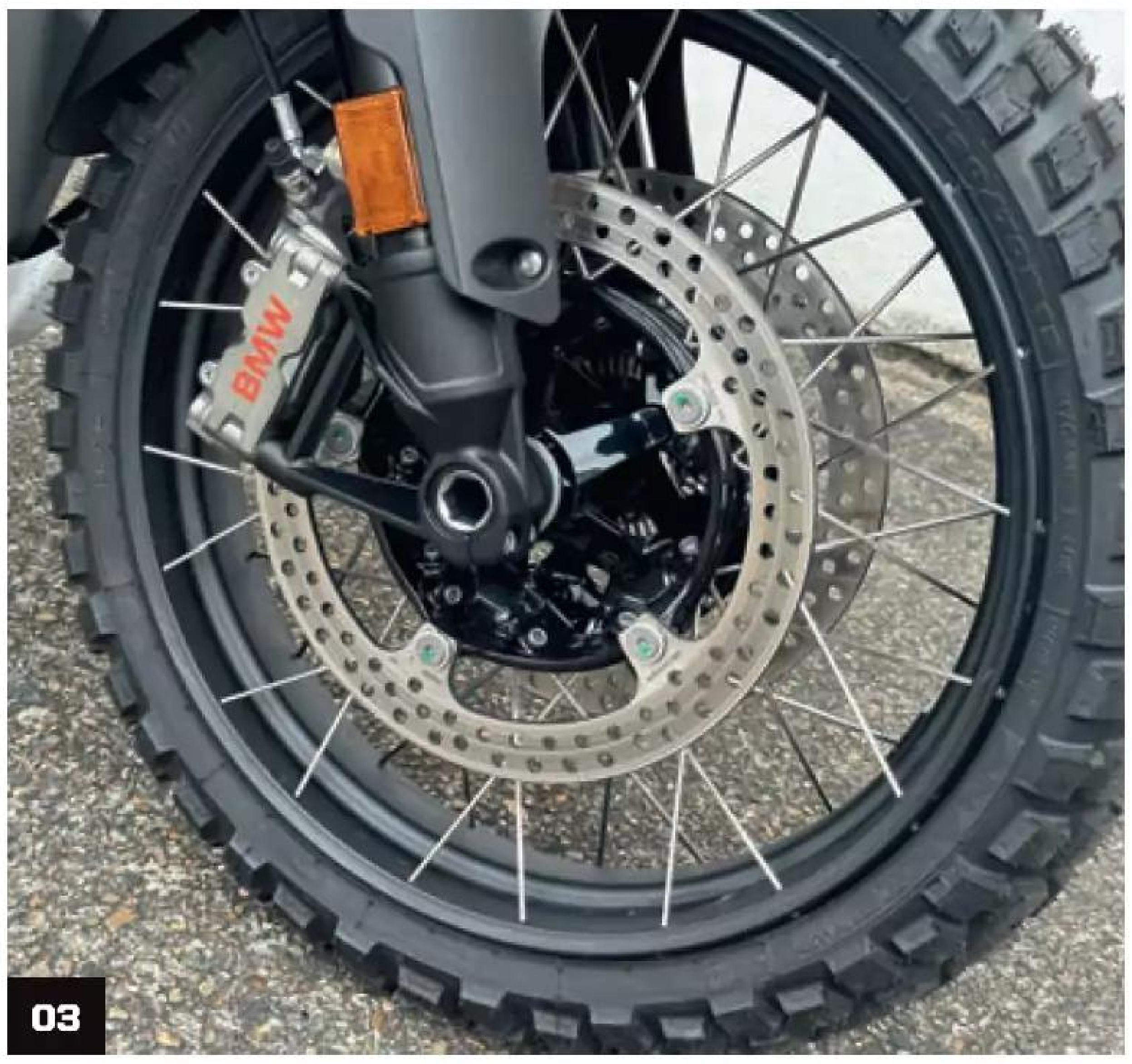
BLACK BEAUTY

But while the ergos are different, the riding technique for the 1300 in the dirt is still the same. Our old mate and master moto trainer Dave Wilson from Bilpin Moto Adventures, who does trials and adventure rider training, is a huge believer in learning to ride the Rhinos slow to help ride them better when you want to go fast.

The 1300 is such a big bike, you don't want to have to fight it in the dirt. Because you won't win when the inertia of all that weight and bulk starts working against you. Like I said, the 1300 is a bike you want to ride smoothly and flow with. Get the technique wired and you will soon be covering big miles in rapid fashion with a big dose of confidence.

Of course, big-mile rides are what the GSA is all about and it was after punching out a couple of 500km-plus days that the Triple Black really struck home with me. Some bikes just make you keen to climb aboard at dawn and go, and go, and go. The 1300 is one of them.

01: Gorgeous Akrapovic titanium/carbon twin muffler set-up is a $1475 extra-cost option. **02:** Left-side switchblock is mission control, with multi-wheel and lots of switchgear. **03:** We can never get enough of BMW's radial-mounted caliper twin disc front brake set-up. Brilliant stoppers. **04:** Front-on view is truly imposing. And yes, those new crash bar extensions are every bit as wide as the handlebars!


03

04

400 kilometres through the bush before lunch? Too easy.
No wonder Clubby looks happy with the world.

SOME BIKES JUST MAKE YOU KEEN TO CLIMB ABOARD AT DAWN AND GO, AND GO, AND GO. THE 1300 GSA IS SURELY ONE OF THEM.

What gelled with me was the 1300's performance, comfort and the confidence it inspired. But what was curious was that the Triple Black gelled with me more than the Trophy X. The X model felt a little tauter and more edgy, like it wanted to be ridden harder in the dirt. The adaptive ride height system and rally seat were the main differences between the two models, and we both commented how the suspension and the rally seat ergos felt quite different. The Trophy X has always been a more off-road-biased variant, so no surprise there. But if you're inclined to go the X model, be sure to give some real consideration to your choice of seat height.

Tank bag, tail bag and no fixed agenda.
That's the kind of ride plan the 1300 GSA revels in.

BOX ON

Performance-wise, the 1300's new shift cam boxer motor with the gearbox now located beneath the engine puts out a healthy 143hp at 7750rpm and a ballsy 149Nm of torque at 6500rpm. The new engine has a typical boxer feel to it, with slightly heavier shifts in the lower gears and a distinctive exhaust note on deceleration. The motor is supremely torquey and easy to ride, and the power delivery is immensely clean thanks to brilliant fuelling. I found the engine had a nice fat spread of mid-range power around 4000rpm that would equate to shifting to fourth at around 80km/h, fifth at around 100km/h and sixth at around 120km/h when you were in a playful touring mood.

In Dynamic mode, however, you could hold gears longer and make the ride as sporty as you liked. At those times, for such a big bike, the 1300 is so, so capable on the tar. It actually feels poised, steering confidently, even on the Metzeler Karoo 4 knobbies fitted to the test bike, and remaining composed without any dive under heavy braking thanks to the inherently stable feeling of the Telelever front end. It always looks over-engineered up front, what with fork tubes, a shock and a swingarm all working away under the steering head, but the Telelever is a set-up that actually works.

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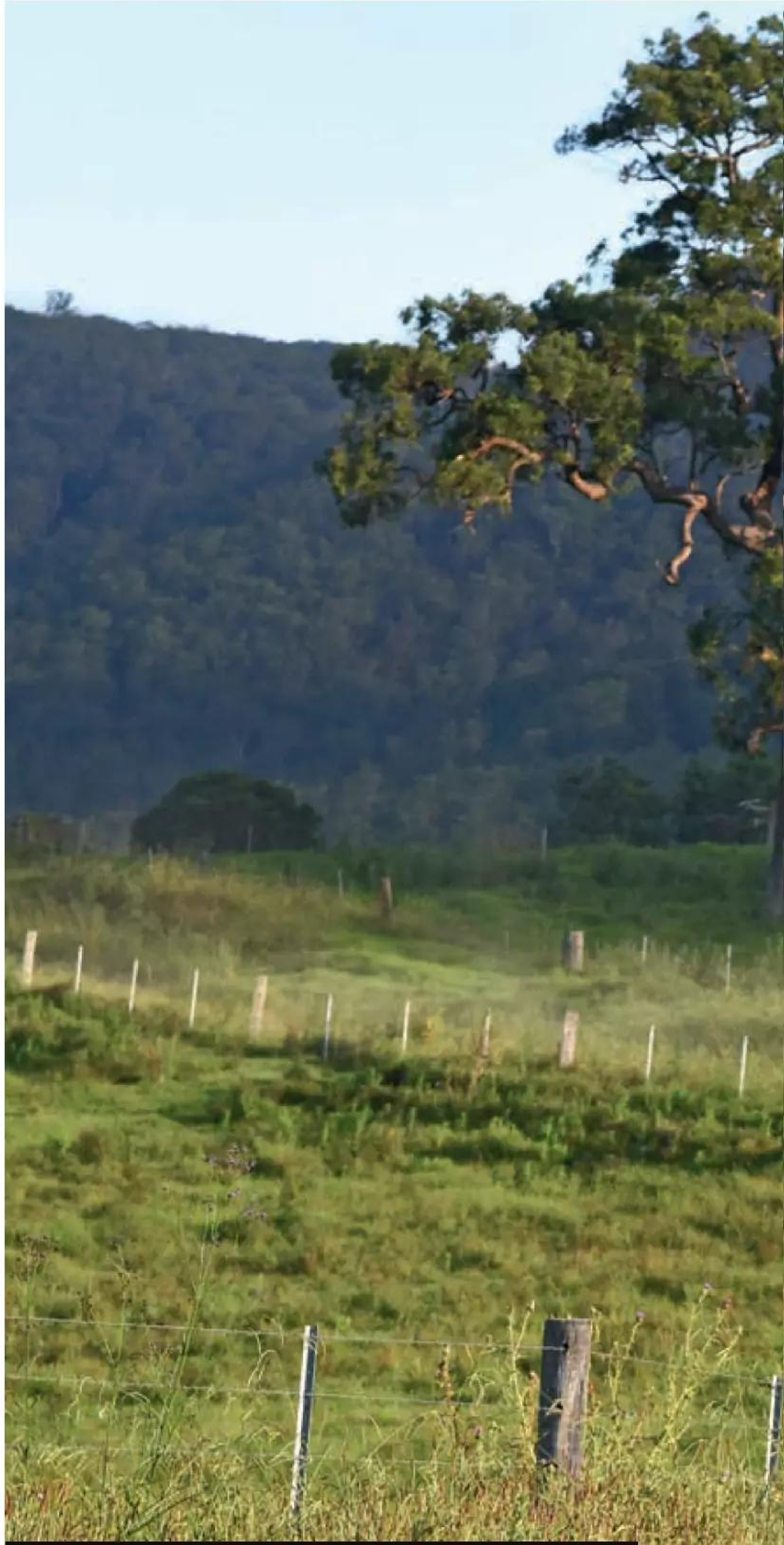
FROM $9,190* RIDE AWAY

BMW's accessory 12-litre tank bag is a beauty, and it clips on to the tank quickly and easily.



In a nutshell, the 1300 carries on the Rhino tradition of inspiring confidence on the blacktop, whether you want spirited performance or long-distance comfort. The screen is electronically adjustable, and cruise control, heated grips and a feast of onboard data and ride set-ups are just finger-tips away via the BMW multi-wheel, switchgear and 6.5 inch TFT display. And there is a lot of tech to get your head around, not to mention learning how to navigate it all onboard. But after a couple of rides you should have it dialled. Or at least after a couple of nights of 'study' over pizza and beer in the shed at home — that's my kind of homework!

Four ride modes can be active to quickly toggle through via the mode button, and various parameters can be configured in the Dynamic Pro and Enduro Pro modes that are part of BMW's Riding Modes Pro set-up in the Dynamic package that's included in the Triple Black variant. You can set Enduro Pro mode to cull the Traction Control and thus avoid a repeat of my Emmagen Creek embarrassing moment. Seriously, there are times when you don't want the TC cutting in and killing the power, such as just when you need to drive out of a creek crossing or through a sudden sand drift.

So use the tech and get your modes configured just the way you want. And here's a free tip: you can use the up/down toggle button on the left switchgear to select a favourite setting to quickly toggle — I used it to conveniently turn the TC on/off as required.

Standard footpegs are good, while the rear brake pedal tip can be easily flipped for sitting or standing riding.

ROAD
TRIP 709.9 km
11:50
BMW MOTORRAD

ABOVE: BMW Connected Ride nav system is a $1390 extra-cost option and plants the nav unit perfectly above the standard TFT screen.

THE C WORD

Speaking of configuring, it's a huge part of the BMW GS experience, and it starts when you first order your bike and configure it in the spec you so desire.

The 1300 GSA comes in Adventure, Trophy, Trophy X, Triple Black and Option 719 variants that have list prices ranging from $30,490 (Adventure) to $38,790 (Option 719). Each variant has different BMW package inclusions — but you have to get the Dynamic package, which gives you the Pro riding modes — and then there is a range of optional equipment that can include the Adaptive Vehicle Height Control ($795), Akrapovic titanium/carbon double silencer ($1475), tank bag ($634), Connected Ride Nav system ($1390) and TFT protector ($92) that were fitted to our Triple Black test

TOP TEN TAKE-AWAYS: BMW R 1300 GS ADVENTURE

- Such a supremely capable massive-mile muncher.
- Strong and tractable yet dynamic power delivery is so good to ride.
- Brakes are simply brilliant.
- Road handling manners are so impressive.
- Ride with the flow when off-road, for at 269kg fully fuelled, you don't want to fight this bike when the going gets tough.
- Fuel tank is physically huge and imposing, but up to 600km range is on offer.
- We fast became real fans of the adaptive height control system.
- Sidestand could be a fraction longer.
- Clip-on tank bag mount system scores two thumbs up: fast and easy, and no straps.
- $40,000 price tag as tested is a lot of money, but you sure are getting a lot of bike – along with a five-year warranty.

IF BIG-MILE, BIG-LOAD RIDES ARE PART OF YOUR ADVENTURE RIDING DNA, THE GSA WILL CERTAINLY TAKE YOU THERE — AND BEYOND.

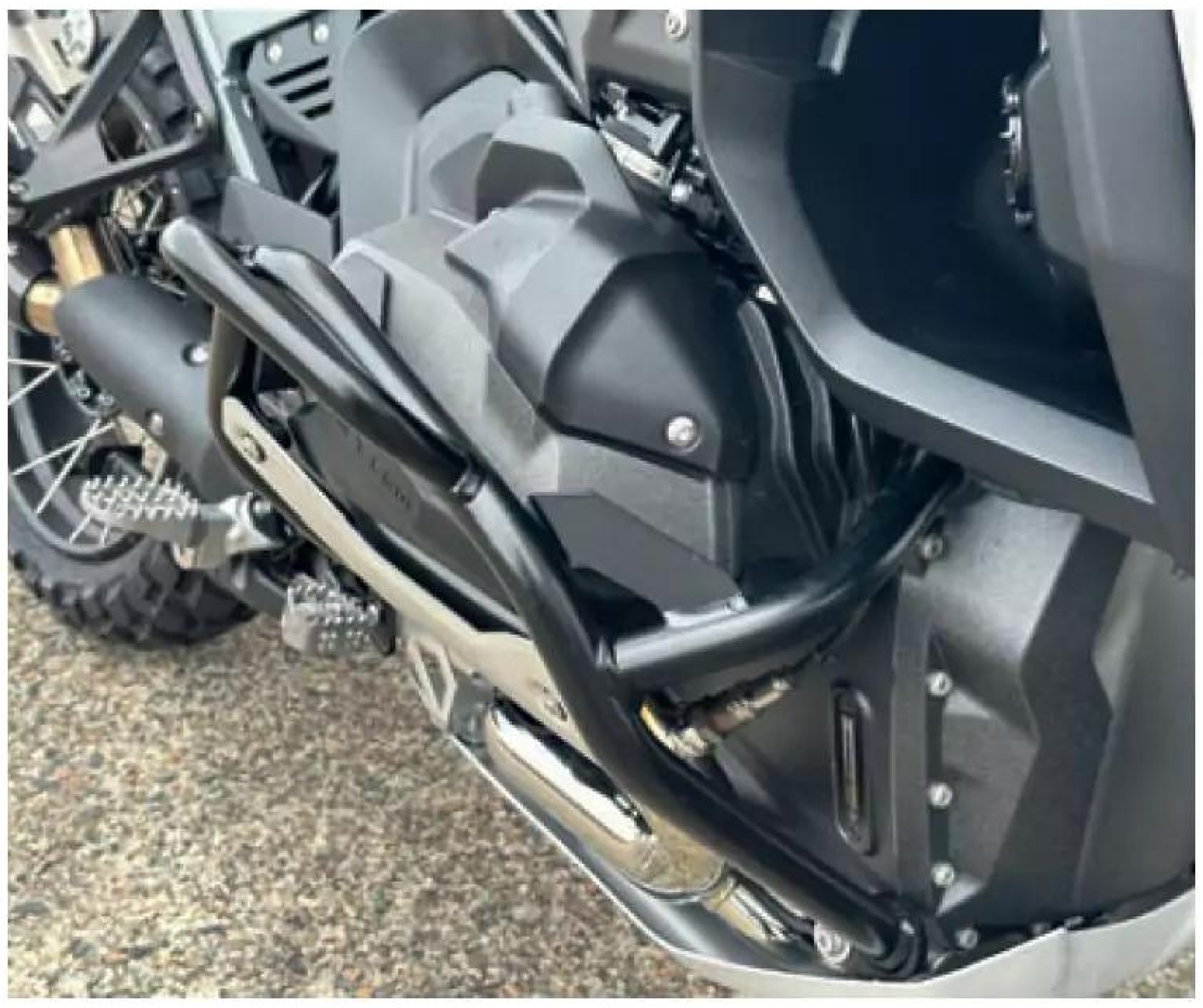
Gravel roads are the GSA's happy hunting ground. It will eat up this stuff day after day.

bike. The Triple Black variant is priced from $36,530, so tally up those options and as we rolled down the highway, this 1300 GSA test bike was approaching $40,000. Gulp. Best you be seated when you read that. And carrying a bunch of roses when you ask the missus to co-sign the finance agreement.

As uber tourers go, there's no question the 1300 GSA tickled my fancy. It's fast, it's comfortable, the suspension is compliant but capable of handling the weight and load across all surfaces, and when you really start to gel with it, you get a feeing of ruling the road — so long as you can stay clear of the bike's sheer bulk overruling you.

And believe it or not, those slab-sided looks ended up growing on me. Although I reckon the Triple Black finish, which is actually more a titanium colour than solid black, looked better in the flesh than the red/white/blue of the Trophy X.

Six months ago I rode the standard R 1300 GS Trophy X in the UK with my old mate Simon Pavey at his BMW Off-Road Skills complex in Wales. That was an experience, and the standard GS was way more suited to the techy off-road tracks than this GSA would ever have been. The GSA is a lot of bike, and after all, it's packing an extra 30kg in weight and a whole lot more bulk between your knees in the ergos department than the GS. But it's always been a matter of horses for courses when it comes to the GSA, and if big-mile, big-load rides are part of your adventure riding DNA, the GSA will certainly take you there — and beyond. **AAB**



ABOVE: Engine crash bars on the GSA include added 'wings' to provide more protection of the bodywork, and to help keep the bike a little further from the deck when you have to pick it up after a tip over.

High atop the New England ranges outside Walcha, the adventure riding is just brilliant. Long gravel roads blazing across grassy green farmland dominate the adventure rides on offer at the Walcha Motorcycle Rally.

TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

When you want to mix motorcycles with all the fun of a country fair, head for the New England region of NSW and take in the annual Walcha Motorcycle Rally.

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY **ANDREW CLUBB**

Follow that bike! With the help of the Armidale Adventure Riders group, the Walcha Motorcycle Rally turns on long and short adventure ride loops that draw in more riders year after year.

Adventure riding is so awesome because the journey can be every bit as good as the destination. Which is precisely the case with this trip, which involved my first visit to the annual Walcha Motorcycle Rally held in the picturesque highlands of the New England region of northern NSW.

AAB ad man Mitch Newell has a few WMRs under his belt and has long been talking up the show, so when the planets aligned for the 2024 Rally, I was in. And when a Benelli TRK 702X test bike arrived the day before our trip, I thought, *Why not?*

So I climbed aboard the Chinese/Italiano soft-roader and spent the entire tour of duty trying to keep Mitch's dust in sight. And Mitch was kicking up plenty of dust aboard his brand-spanking-new World Raid fire cracker — fair dinkum, you've never seen a bloke so excited about getting a new bike. It even had that new bike smell. Ripping.

Mitch and I blazed off the Sydney to Walcha run in a solid single day, with plenty of Benelli photo stops along the way. It was a grouse ride, with only 30 minutes of freeway slab the whole day. The rest was the kind of mix of back roads, gravel roads and forest roads and trails that keep a smile on your dial the whole way. Perfect.

HELLO & WELCOME

Rolling into Walcha and hunting down our digs at a farmstay on the edge of town, it was clear Walcha is motorcycle central on the third weekend of November each year. There are signs everywhere welcoming bike riders, bike displays in every second window of the shops in town, and bikes and riders of all shapes and sizes everywhere you look.

The local showground complex is the hub for the Rally and it's perfect for the job. The place was fairly pumping when we lobbed late on Friday arvo, and proceedings never backed off until home time on Sunday.

Perched at just on 1000 metres elevation, Walcha has a kind of highland vibe going on, but it's fair to say the town has seen more prosperous days in its history as a wool and timber-producing hub of the local district. The Rally injects much-needed funds into the local community, so little wonder it's so well received.

But what has long made Walcha quite the mecca for bikers is the fact it's positioned at the junction of the Oxley Highway, which

ABOVE: Street procession down the main drag of Walcha is a sight to see! **BELOW:** The couple that rides together, smiles together! A mighty KTM 1290 Super Adventure and matching Alpinestars Bogota jackets gave this couple plenty to smile about. **BELOW LEFT:** International guests included crews from Mosko Moto and Outback Motortek, who took in the Walcha Rally as part of an extensive Aussie east coast tour.

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When ADV skills session meets barrel racing madness! Miles Davis moves a little earth on the rodeo ground.

runs east to the coast via a zillion winding corners, and Thunderbolts Way, which carves straight south over the mountains to Gloucester. They're two rides the tarmac scratchers go gonzo for.

As for us adventure riders, Walcha lies deep in the heart of the New England region, which is home to endless gravel roads, forest roads and fire trails. There's literally thousands of kilometres of the stuff. And so much of it is real good stuff.

While the Walcha Motorcycle Rally was originally created as a predominantly road bike-biased festival, in recent years an adventure bike component has continued to grow and grow. With the assistance of the Armidale Adventure Riders group, dedicated short and long loop supported adventure rides are staged as part of official festivities.

When your dad's part of the ADV sweep crew, you just gotta tag along!

So no prize for guessing where we were bright and early on Saturday morning: riders' briefing at the showground for the adventure rides … along with hundreds of ADV riders on all manner of machinery ranging from small-bore trailies right through to primo Euro uber-tourers.

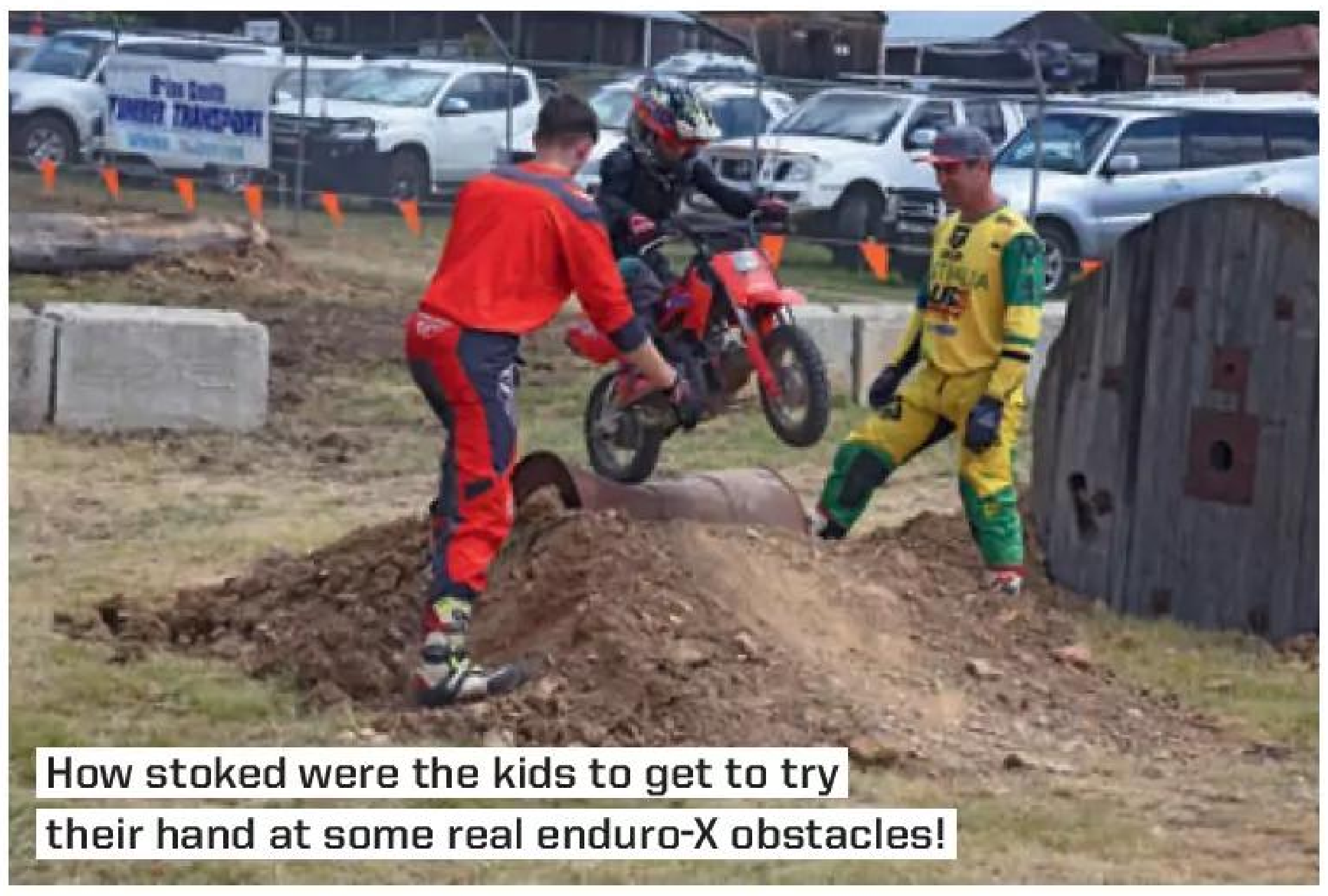
TIME TO RIDE

We opted for Saturday morning's short half-day ADV loop, which headed south out of town, while a longer full-day ADV loop would be heading north in the direction of Armidale.

Bolting early to get ahead of the group for photo vantage points, Mitch and I were revelling in the fast and open gravel roads that punched across the lush green farmland. And the emphasis is on 'lush' and 'green' — the winter and spring rains had clearly been good and despite being just a couple of weeks short of the start of summer, the country looked so healthy. Awesome.

The course was a good one for ADV riders of all skill levels on bikes of all sizes. But if there's one component to be wary of in the New England, it's the slippery granite surface on most of the gravel roads, and the stuff is just waiting to catch you out.

And it did manage to catch a posse of riders at one point, where we happened upon a gaggle of riders off their bikes and frantically waving to everyone to slow down. A tightening right-hander at the end of a straight featured an ugly off-camber that spelled trouble. Three riders had run foul of the turn in the dust, with varying injuries suspected, and the rescue squad thus being called.



How stoked were the kids to get to try their hand at some real enduro-X obstacles!

Keep it up, son! And he did.

Mitch and I wished the riders well and carried on, treating each blind corner with a little more respect … just in case.

Like I said, the stuff is slippery: consider yourself warned.

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Did you know Barkbusters bike specific and Ego handguards have different shaped backbones?

ADVENTURE BEND

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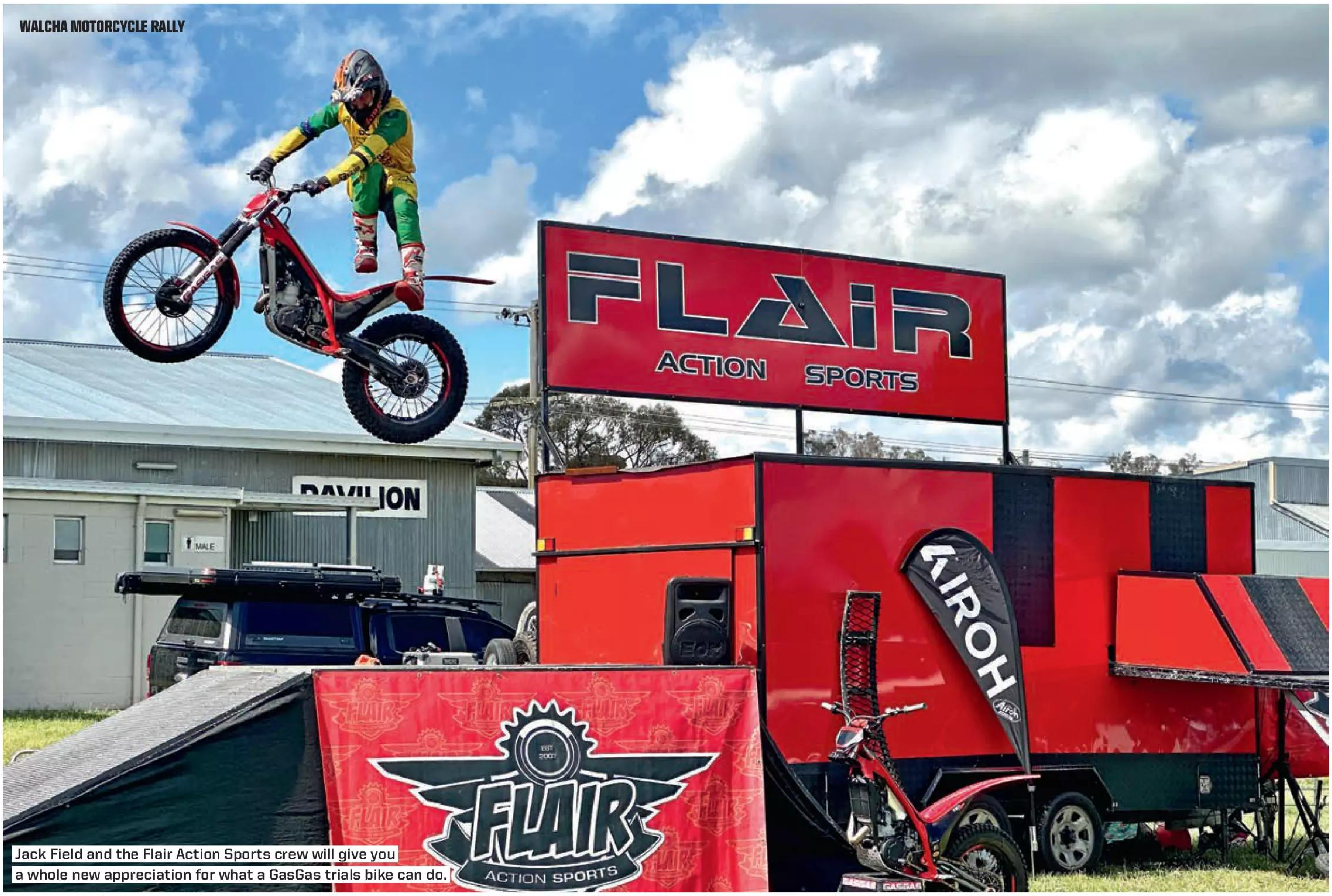

Jack Field and the Flair Action Sports crew will give you a whole new appreciation for what a GasGas trials bike can do.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE RANCH

When we rolled back into Walcha at lunchtime, one of the highlights of the Rally was in full swing. The bike procession through the main street of town is always a hit with the locals, as hundreds of riders rumble by on all manner of machinery.

Back at the showground, the day's schedule was firing on all cylinders. An excellent Show & Shine presented an eye-watering array of two- and three-wheeled hardware, the chrome-plated beasts and snarling superbikes deserving of many a second glance.

Industry alley kept humming all day long with a heap of trade exhibitors, including Motorcycle Adventure Products, Roaming Horizons, the Bike Butler, Kat's Adventure Ride, Eagle Powersports, Mosko Moto and Outback Motortek, to name but a few.

Actually, special mention has to be made of the Mosko Moto and Outback Motortek teams, who made the WMR a highlight of their three-week Aussie east coast promotional ride. And didn't Roel, Alex, Killian, JC and Lorry, who all hail from overseas, just love it. As did Brisbane-based BMW GS rider Lisa Potter, who offered to 'mother-hen' the boys on their tour. Good times spent grass-root promoting the Mosko Moto and Outback Motortek brands and product lines — top job, teams!

CUNNING STUNTS

As for on-bike action, the schedule just never let up. Hero Aussie extreme trials rider Jack Field was on-site with his Flair Riders crew, and they mixed regular extreme trials stunt shows with enduro-X demos and special enduro-X kids' training sessions. They also had a GasGas

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What six-year-old would not want to try out a GasGas mini e-bike?

MARSHAL
MARSHAL
MARSHAL

Saturday morning riders' briefing for the adventure rides. Yeah, the ADV rides are popular.

ENDURISTAN

AAB's Mitch meets Shannon and Nicole from Motorcycle Adventure Products in industry alley.

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Watch the Simpson Desert Ultimate Loop video by ADVLife
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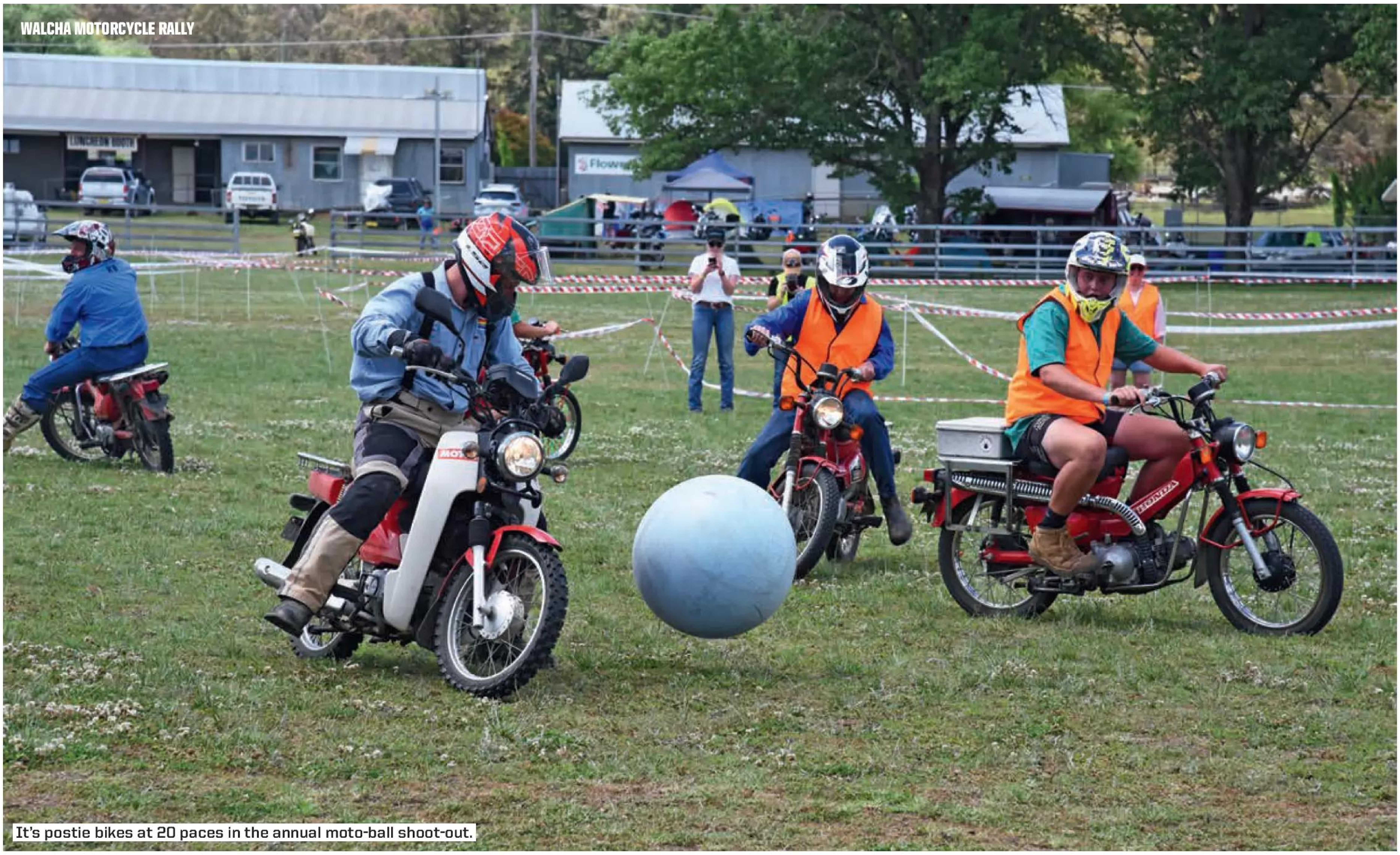

It's postie bikes at 20 paces in the annual moto-ball shoot-out.

IF YOU THOUGHT THE MATILDAS HAD REAL BALL SKILLS, YOU SHOULD SEE THE GOOD OL' BOYS PLAYING POSTIE BIKE SOCCER.

electric minibikes demo area set up, and the stream of kids keen for that was incessant.

Just to mix things up, there were also Best Mullet and Best Tattoo contests — seriously — and then the main arena roared into life with Postie Bike racing and Postie Bike Soccer contests. If you thought the Matildas had real ball skills, you should see these good ol' boys trying to find the back of the net while not T-boning each other.

Later in the arvo attention turned to the rodeo ring, where Miles Davis was all set up to host an hour-long ADV Skills Session. MD kept the crowd entertained with a feast of his adventure riding wisdom, and then wrapped things up with an impromptu display of barrel racing aboard a BMW R 1250 GSA Rhino — nice work, MD!

As the arvo went on, live music kept the throngs entertained, while an evening Demolition Derby back in the showground delivered a true fight-to-the-death contest that had the crowd five-deep all the way around the perimeter fence. It was awesome.

After all that action, a mighty feed and a few ice cold beverages, along with a sizeable chaser of bench racing, capped off a day that truly was akin to a celebration of mixing motorcycles with an old-school country fair.

SEE YOU THERE

As excuses go for a weekend away on two wheels, the Walcha Motorcycle Rally is right up there. No matter which direction you're coming from, there's a cracking ADV ride to be had in just getting to Walcha. And then once you're there, the fun and games are only limited by your own enthusiasm to get amongst it.

Put it in your diary now — the third weekend in November — and take the high road to get to the Walcha Motorcycle Rally. **AAB**

Lorry Gombos from Outback Motortek spent the weekend talking crash bars and protection with throngs of bike fans.

www.walchamotorcyclerally.com.au
2 LOUD

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Now there's a slice of adventure country if ever we saw it, along with a bike that actually surprised us, even though we had no pre-conceptions of what a Benelli adventure bike would be like. At $13,590 ride-away, it surely rates as value for money.

SURPRISE PACKAGE

What happens when you combine a big dose of Italian design flair with a Chinese-built ADV machine? You get a sharply-priced soft-roader that delivered quite the surprise on a three-day and almost 1500-kay romp from Sydney to the Walcha Motorcycle Rally and back again.

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY **ANDREW CLUBB**

Even at six-foot-three, ad man Mitch could make the Benelli's stand-up ergos work as we sliced north through the upper Hunter Valley.

Benelli is a motorcycle brand with such a long and storied history, so it was revealing to discover just how many Aussie ADV riders had absolutely no idea what this bike was.

"That's a pretty flash-looking jigger, Clubby, but what is it?"

"It's a Benelli, mate."

"A what?"

"A Benelli. It's a historic Italian brand now owned by the Chinese."

"Never heard of them."

"You must have, they've been in business for over 100 years. They actually made the world's first production series six-cylinder sports bike, the 'Sei', back in the 1970s. Surely you've heard of that?"

"A what? Who the hell would want a whopping great six-cylinder bike?"

"Well actually, mate ..."

Little did they know that I am the proud owner of a Honda CBX six-cylinder sports bike, which is acknowledged as one of Mr Honda's greatest engineering marvels. But Benelli actually aced Honda by bringing out its Sei six-cylinder bike before the CBX, a fact that was always a feather in the cap for the Italian brand.

WELCOME TO CHINA

Alas, sales of six-cylinder superbikes never set the world on fire — go figure! — and after a period of ownership changes between the 1970s and early 2000s, the Benelli brand — which was established way back in 1911 by the Italian Benelli family — was acquired by the Qianjiang Motor Group, which is a Chinese company that has been controlled by the massive automotive Geely Holding Group since 2015.

Qianjiang, which is one of China's largest motorcycle manufacturers, acquired Benelli in 2005 and over the past couple of decades has invested in the brand by developing a range of Benelli bikes for sale in both China and global markets. The bikes are designed in Italy and manufactured in China.

Here in Australia Benelli bikes are distributed by Urban Moto Imports, which also represents Royal Enfield, Segway Powersports, Rieju, Peugeot Motocycles, Super Soco electric scooters and mopeds, and Torrot electric kids' bikes.

The local Benelli line-up includes a pint-sized road-legal 125cc TNT 'fun' bike, a 499cc cruiser dubbed the 502C, four Leoncino 500 and 800 scrambler-style machines, and a five-bike line-up of TRK adventure tourers.

The TRK range includes the entry-level TRK 251 with a 249cc motor that's priced at just $6,690 ride-away, the TRK 502 and TRK 502X with LAMS-legal 499cc twin-cylinder

Plenty of Italian design flair in this Chinese-made ADV machine.

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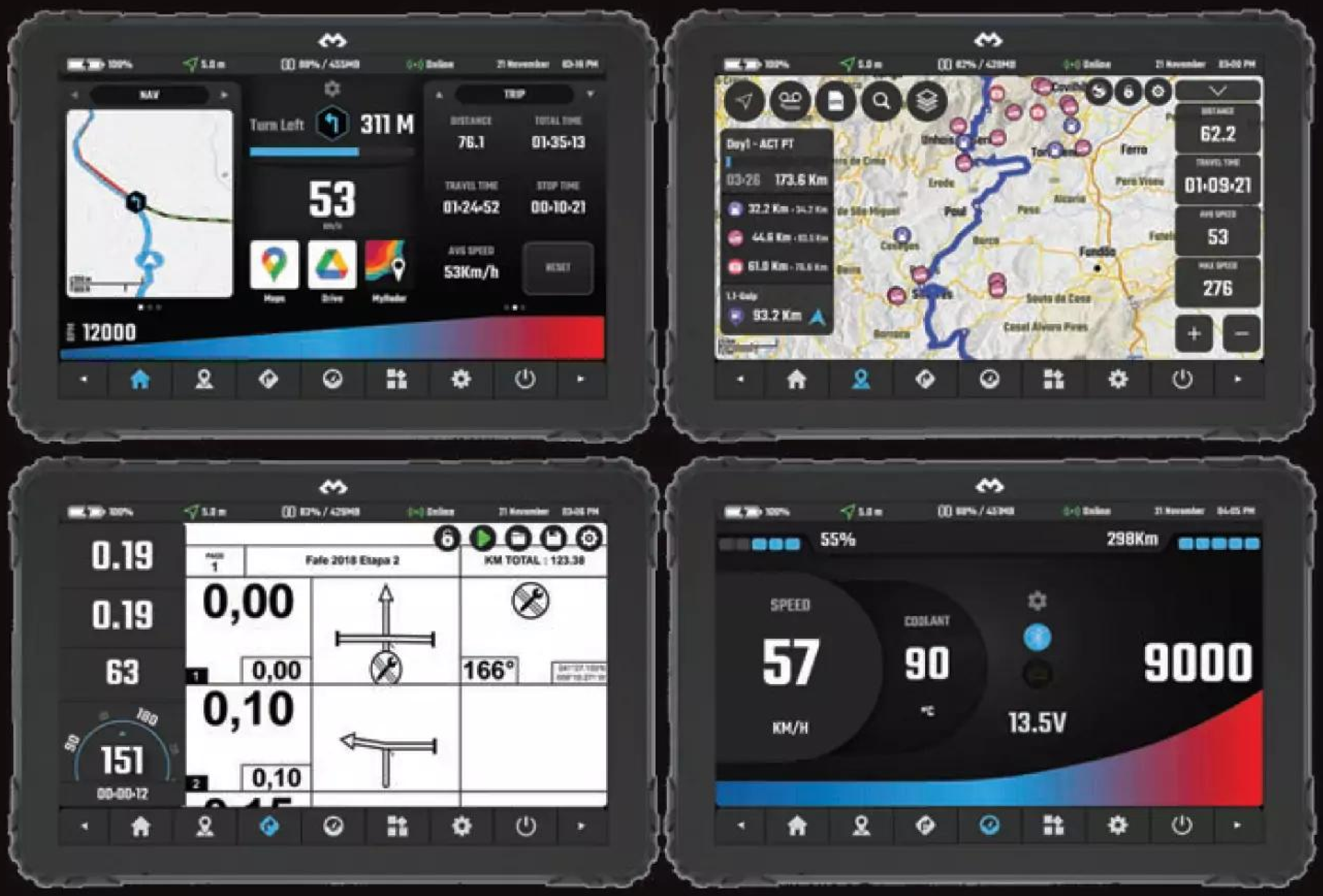

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Loaded up with a Giant Loop Fandango tank bag, ADVWorx duffle bag and tool bag, we were all set for a three-day charge to the Walcha Motorcycle Rally.

Sculpted front end sure stands out in a crowd, while the front indicators are positioned low and forward on the front fairing panels.

engines, and the TRK 702 and 702X with 698cc twin-cylinder motors.

The 702s slot into a fairly hectic segment of the Aussie ADV market where bikes like the Honda XL750 Transalp, Yamaha Ténéré, Suzuki V-Strom 800DE and CFMOTO 800 MT are the established players.

X MARKS THE SPOT

A fast study of the specs sheets reveals the TRK 702X is the more off-road ready of Benelli's 702 duo. The 702X runs 19/17-inch spoked wheels that are fitted with Pirelli Scorpion Rally STR tyres, whereas the 702 is fitted with 17-inch alloy wheels front and rear that come with more road-oriented rubber.

UMI's offer of a TRK 702X test bike came the day before we were due to head off from AAB's lavish Sydney HQ to attend the Walcha Motorcycle Rally in northern NSW. Perfect timing! What better way to put the bike through its paces than a three-day romp up into the heart of NSW's New England adventure mecca.

First impressions suggest that TRK comes loaded with some serious Italian design flair. Just look at it: beauty is in the eye of the beholder, sure, but the 702X oozes style, from its beak nose, through its sweeping bodywork, to the angular rear luggage rack perched high above the rear guard. The dynamic colours of our Anthracite Grey test bike, right down to the wheel rim highlights, help the Benelli to stand out in the crowd.

Build quality, fit and finish all looked good as we got up close and personal with the bike for the first time. Little things like backlit switchgear, colour TFT screen, USB power outlets, Bluetooth connectivity, bolt-on pillion peg hangers, serrated footpegs, adjustable (fore/aft) rear brake pedal tip and a centrestand as standard fitment had us nodding quietly in approval. But then the very exposed exhaust headers and mid-pipes, engine oil filter, engine cases (admittedly there is a small, light skid plate under the sump) and sidestand mount and switch left us cringing with concerns that they could be easily damaged.

But overall, at $13,590 ride-away, the 702X looked to offer good value for money, given that price puts it thousands of dollars under the competition. But how would it ride? That's the question, so we strapped on a Giant Loop Fandango tank bag, ADVWorx duffle bag and a bumbag full of tools (just in case!) and set loose north on the road to Walcha.

WHICH WAY TO WALCHA?

Vital stats for the TRK 702X include a wheelbase of 1505mm, a lowly seat height of 835mm and a claimed dry weight of 218kg. Fill the 20-litre fuel tank and engine fluids and the Benelli hits the road at around 235kg. And while the suspension travel looks long, looks can be deceiving. There's actually only 140mm wheel travel up front, and 173mm wheel travel out back — more about that shortly.

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Sweeping gravel roads are juicy fodder for the Benelli, which will romp through this stuff all day long.

THE POWER IS MEATY ENOUGH THAT YOU CAN GET A SLIDE GOING ON THE GRAVEL, AND THE DELIVERY IS SMOOTH ENOUGH THAT YOU CAN EASILY KEEP IT ALL IN LINE.

Climbing aboard the bike, that low seat height makes reaching the deck with your feet easy, while the stepped dual-seat design certainly promotes you sitting very much in the bike, not up on it like a dirtbike. While the bars have a particularly high rise, the low seat, high-ish placed pegs and overall ergos package actually all play out okay, and at 179cm tall, the seated position for me was plenty comfortable on the road as myself and ad man Mitch started the charge north. We blazed up the M1 freeway and then peeled off at Peats Ridge to hit the winding back roads through Kulnura, Wollombi and Broke on the way to our first fuel and smoko stop at Singleton.

Right away the Benelli's Euro 5-compliant motor impressed. It puts out 69hp at 8000rpm and 70Nm torque at 6000rpm, which is respectable in a category dominated by parallel-twin engines. The power delivery is particularly smooth, the fuelling is clean, and with a well-placed spread of torque the bike's really easy to ride on the road. The clutch pull is light with plenty of feel, and the six-speed gearbox shifts cleanly with well-spaced ratios. In top gear at just over 4500rpm, the Benelli was purring along the freeway at a leisurely 105km/h, with plenty more on tap for safe passing moves.

In terms of electronic rider aids, well, at this price point it's all about your right wrist. There's no traction control, no wheelie control, no cruise control and no riding modes. Just twist the throttle, work the clutch and gearbox, and go.

GRAVEL IN YOUR TRAVELS

When we started to hit the gravel, the 702X continued to pleasantly surprise. We figured those sit-in road-friendly ergos might make the stand-up ergos cramped and uncomfortable, but you can actually get up on the pegs, grip the tank/seat junction with your knees, position your body weight forward and get into it without feeling uncomfortable. While you certainly wouldn't describe the Benelli as offering dirt bike

ergos, the ride on the gravel was better than we had anticipated. The power is meaty enough that you can get a slide going on loose gravel, and the delivery is smooth enough to keep it all in line with use of your personal traction control system.

The Pirelli STR tyres certainly go okay on the tar, and they handled the gravel roads of the Hunter Valley with a reasonable amount of aplomb. They're actually reasonable fitment first tyres for this bike, which is clearly more a soft-roader than ever being considered as an ADV off-roader. And the 19-inch front wheel is another clear hint at the Benelli's intended design brief.

Another hint at where Benelli positions this bike is the aforementioned suspension set-up. We got kind of excited when we first saw the beefy 50mm USD forks, but then sprung — get it?! — a reality check on ourselves when we discovered the fork has no external adjustments and offers only 140mm front-wheel travel. The shock, meantime, is spring preload and rebound and compression damping adjustable, and it controls 173mm of rear-wheel travel.

The suspension action is controlled and compliant on the tar, with some dive at the front under heavy braking. The short suspension travel and 19-inch front wheel help the bike to punt through twisting tarmac sections with ease, and there's enough confidence in the ride to inspire you to push on with spirit.

On the dirt, we would regularly find the limit of the fork's travel when hitting fast and sharp-edged holes, and given I'm packing over 100kg when geared up, plus the luggage load, there's no question we were beyond the bike's spring rates. Sharp corrugations out of fast corners led to regular rear-wheel stomping as the shock fought the good fight to keep things under control.

But otherwise the Benelli had no nasty surprises as we pushed on hard and fast along all the open gravel roads on the way to Nundle, where we made a lunch and fuel stop before the final push up and over the ranges to Walcha.

When the trails then got tighter and steeper, downhill fire trails did show the Benelli's ABS was a little too keen to release the brakes just when you didn't want it. It's a Bosch system, but at this price you don't get the very latest and greatest, so I had a couple of 'oh-sh*t' moments when the ABS would threaten to let you run off into the undergrowth. I let it happen twice before getting the message and treating the skatey surface and ABS with greater respect.

ROLL YOUR OWN

Rolling into Walcha late in the arvo, we'd knocked over more than 500km for the day and the Benelli had done it with relative ease and not missed a beat. Which it repeated over the next two days as we took in one of the Walcha Motorcycle Rally's organised adventure rides on the Saturday and then blazed back home on Sunday.

Fuel consumption averaged just on 20km per litre over the ride, which translates to a 400km range to dry from the 20-litre tank.

Thankfully, I managed to get through the entire ride without belting any of those

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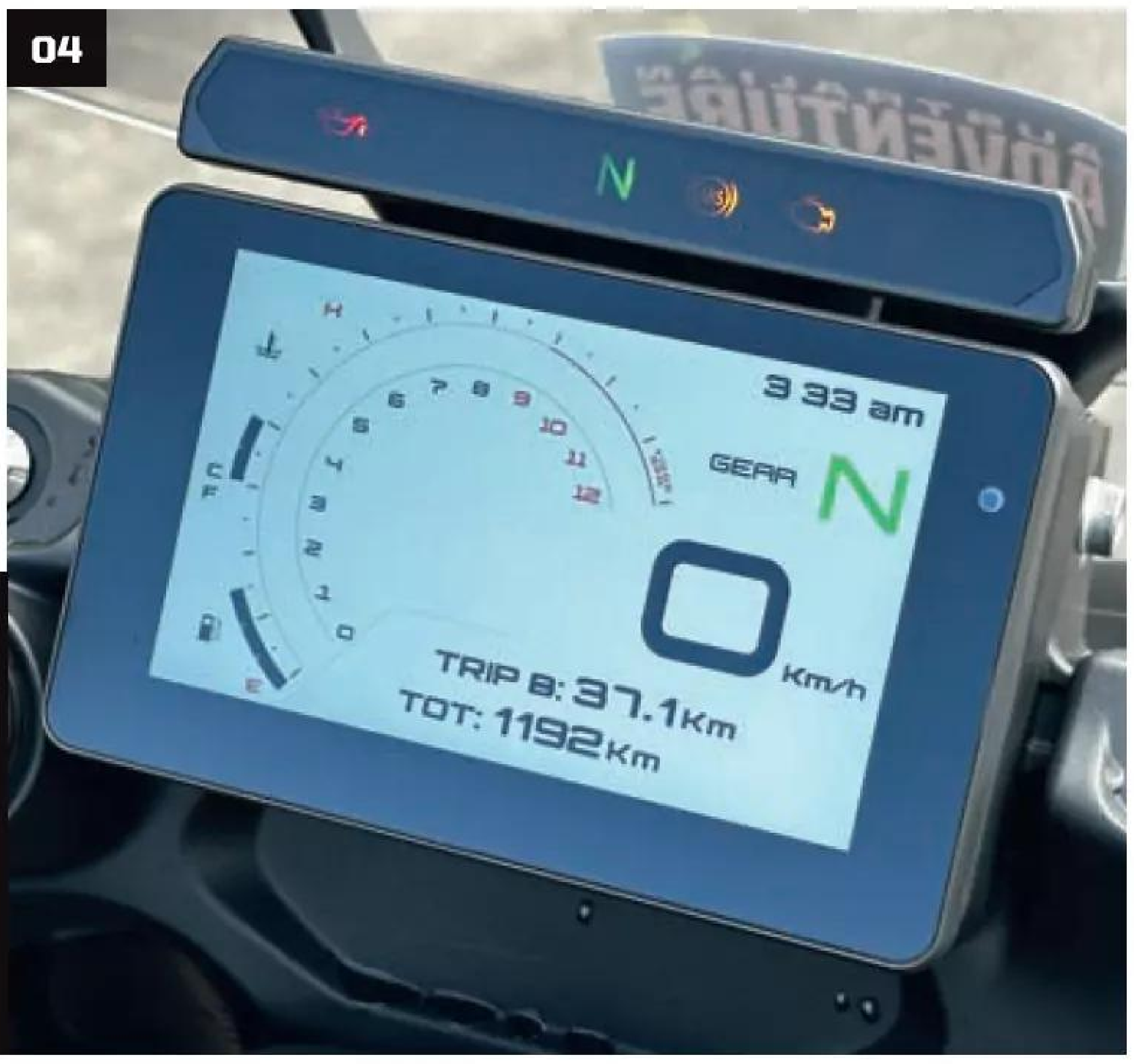


01: 698cc parallel twin engine puts out 69hp at 8000rpm, but beware much of that undercarriage is unprotected. **02:** Centrestand is a handy standard feature. **03:** Dual 320mm wave rotors and dual-piston calipers handle the stopping chores up front. **04:** TFT screen is easy to read, with a line-up of warning and indicator lights located above.

Mitch takes in the view and ponders whether he wants a Chinese banquet or Italian feed tonight.

aforementioned undercarriage items that are all sitting out there in the breeze, looking so very exposed. I thought the sidestand mount and switch would be goners for sure in a left-side lay-down, while rock farms — should you ever venture there! — would make short work of the exhaust headers and engine cases when things got gnarly. And on the right side the rather sizeable muffler looks like it would take a hit if dropped that way, as does the water pump that's located on the front-right leading corner of the engine cases.

Comfort was good and the screen allowed me to tuck down out of the breeze when required. The dual seat design does mean you stay planted in one seated position, so I'd stand up to stretch, or even slide back up onto the edge of the pillion seat to give my back a break.

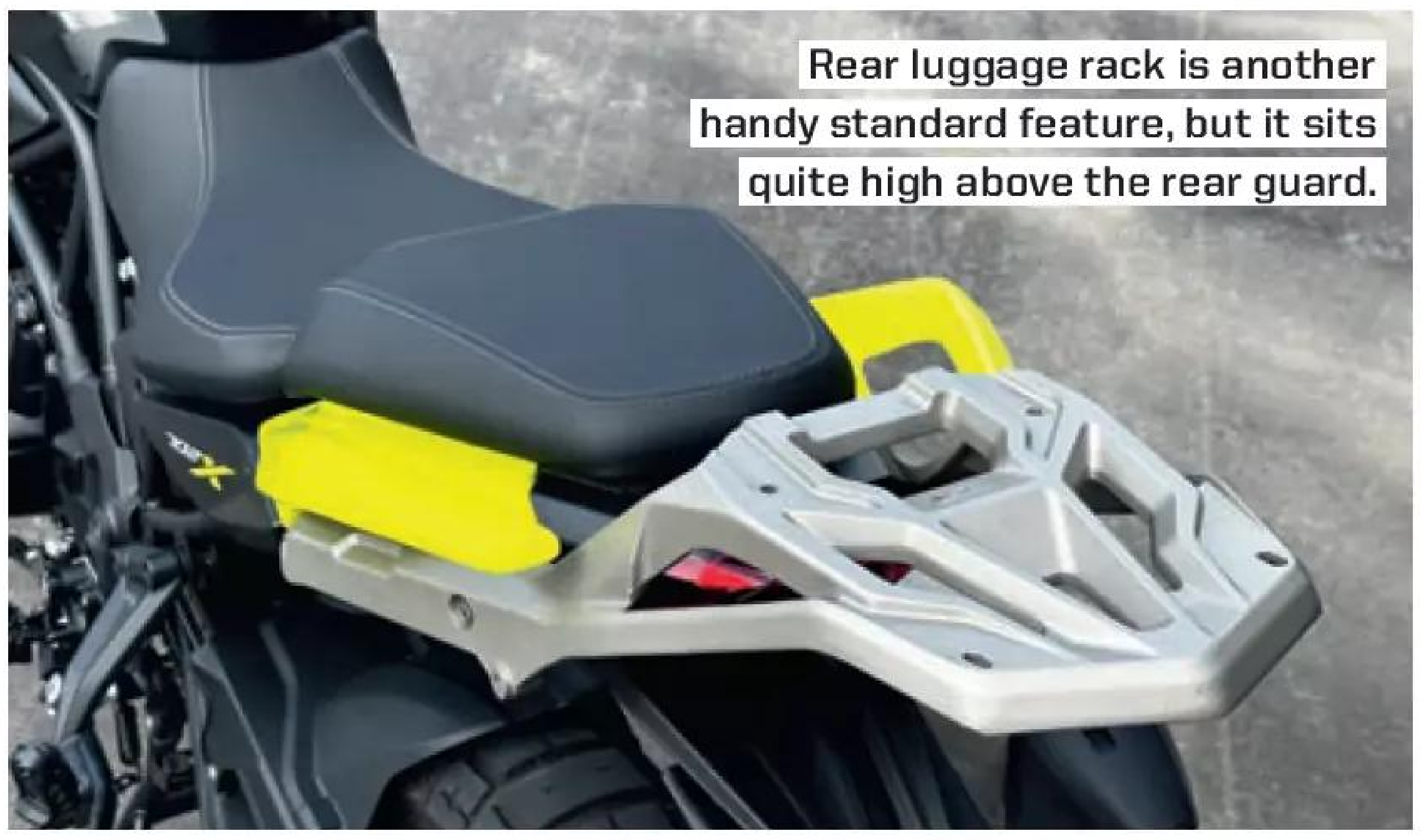
Speaking of the pillion seat, I actually tethered the ADVWorx duffle bag on the pillion seat, rather than further back on the luggage rack. Curiously, the rack sits so rearward and high, which puts any luggage load way up where you don't really want it.

WRAPPING IT UP

I've said it a couple of times now, so I'm sure you're getting the impression the TRK 702X was pleasantly surprising to ride. All I knew about Benelli's past was the Sei six-cylinder superbike, so riding a new-generation Chinese-made adventure bike that's wrapped in a package loaded with a big dose of Italian style and running the Benelli logo was breaking new ground indeed.

As soft-road adventure bikes go, the Benelli presents as a value-for-money proposition that signals the Chinese really are coming, and sometimes they're coming dressed in an Italian designer suit. **AAB**

www.benelli.com.au



Rear luggage rack is another handy standard feature, but it sits quite high above the rear guard.

TOP TEN TAKE-AWAYS: BENELLI TRK 702X

- Sharply priced at $13,590 ride-away, which brings it to market well under the mainstream competition.
- Italian design, styling and looks are impressive.
- 20km per litre fuel economy on test equates to 400km range to dry.
- TFT screen is large and easy to view.
- Backlit switchgear, centrestand and adjustable rear brake pedal tip are standard features.
- Limited 140mm front suspension travel and the 50mm USD fork has no external adjustment.
- Luggage rack sits high and rearward, so strap your duffle bag to the pillion seat instead.
- Header pipes, engine cases, oil filter, sidestand mount/switch and water-pump are all exposed.
- Two-year unlimited warranty and roadside assistance included.
- Limited dealer network compared to the leading Japanese and European brands.

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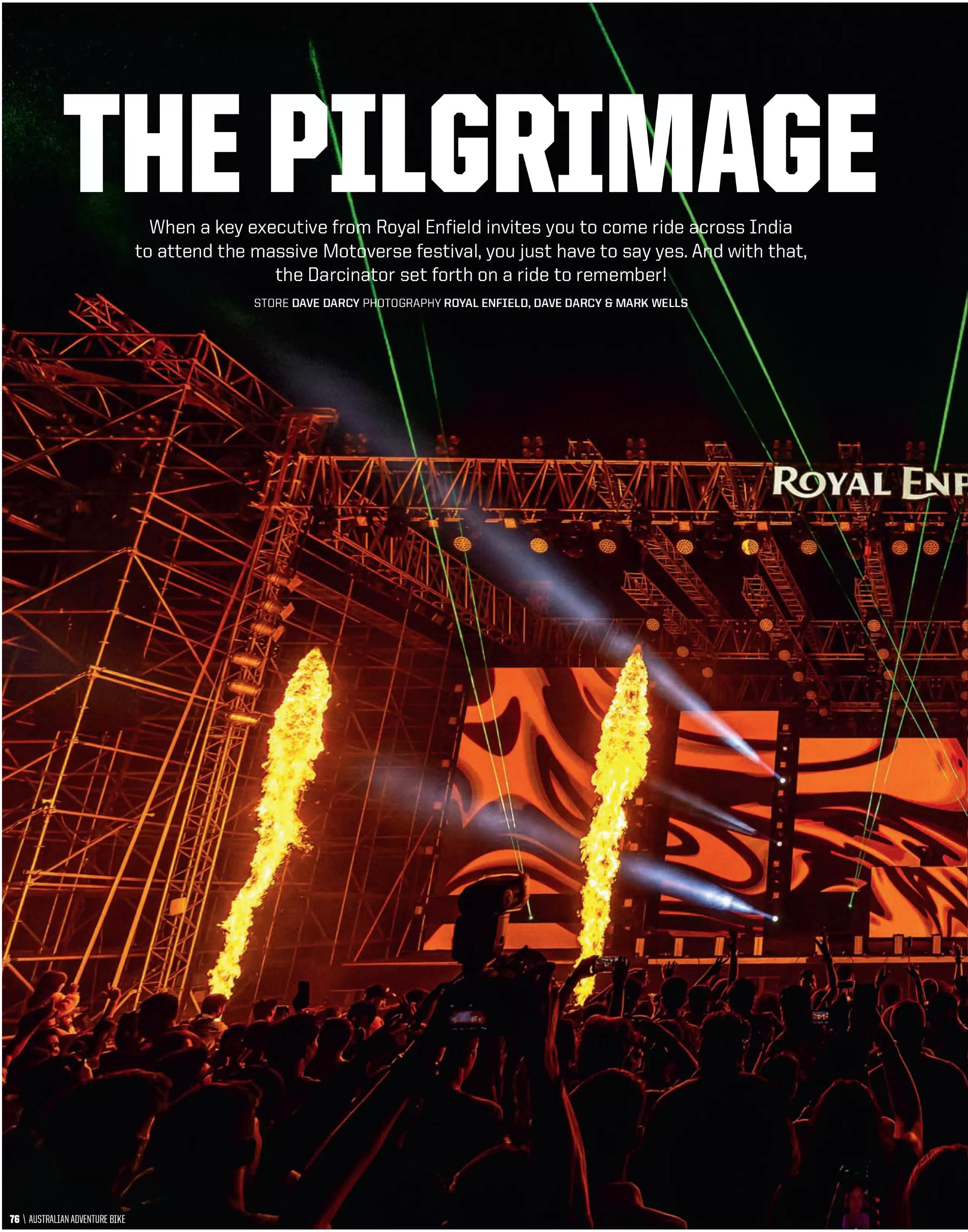
THE PILGRIMAGE

When a key executive from Royal Enfield invites you to come ride across India to attend the massive Motoverse festival, you just have to say yes. And with that, the Darcinator set forth on a ride to remember!

STORE **DAVE DARCY** PHOTOGRAPHY **ROYAL ENFIELD, DAVE DARCY & MARK WELLS**



Royal Enfield's Motoverse festival combines motorcycles and music, and both come in massive unadulterated doses! The celebration of moto-culture is overwhelming.

The dirt track layout at Motoverse was tight and technical, delivering a feast of action.

Here I was, just ten days before an international ride, planning to cross southern India from east to west — from Chennai, the original Indian home of Royal Enfield, to the stunning coastal city of Goa. But here's the catch: I had no plane ticket, no accommodation, no route planned and wasn't even sure who my riding companions would be.

By the time I arrived in India, my key riding buddy had missed his flight. As I sat outside the rendezvous point, nervously checking my watch, I thought to myself: could you imagine if this was Clubby? He'd be in the west wing of Northern Beaches Hospital Emergency Ward with apoplexy!

Even my own blood pressure started rising as the hours ticked by. The morning monsoon drenched me and no one turned up. I truly was sh*tting myself. What a way to start a ride. But in the end, what a ride it was!

BEST LAID PLANS

This ride was 'hatched' from a meeting with Mark Wells, Chief of Design for Royal Enfield. Back in June, I interviewed him for AAB at the Royal Enfield Tech Centre in the UK Midlands. This guy is one enthusiastic rider.

I'll never forget his words: "Dave, everyone rides the Himalayan mountains, but southern India is where it's at — it's got amazing twisty tarmac, jungle trails, great food and even better people. Let's do it: we'll ride across India to Motoverse! It's a pilgrimage; people from all over the country will be doing the same thing."

Fast forward four months, and now I was the pilgrim. Like thousands of motorcycle fanatics from all over India, we were converging on Goa, an amazing city with a rich history rooted in the spice trade and a beautiful blend of cultures.

Eventually my riding buddy Sean turned up. A flat front tyre had delayed him, courtesy of dirt getting into a tubeless valve without a cap. He'd pumped it up and it was holding. Well, for now at least. We were aboard two Himalayans provided by Royal Enfield.

Sean, an engineer at Royal Enfield, played a significant role in the development of the Himalayan, including real-world testing of prototypes. A couple of spectacular crashes while pushing the bike's limits earned him the nickname 'Sean, the Crash Test Dummy for Royal Enfield.'

Soon enough we were off, and I reacquainted myself with the chaotic rhythm of Asian traffic. It was a baptism of fire during peak hour in Chennai, a busy city known as 'India's Detroit' for its car and bike manufacturing industry.

Many describe Indian traffic as chaos, but it's not. There's a rhythm to it, like flowing water. No sudden movements, no swerving — just slow, deliberate direction changes to get where you want to go.

RIGHT: Mark Wells is not only Royal Enfield's Chief of Design, but he is also one of the most passionate and enthusiastic motorcycle riders you will ever meet.

Dirt track action as Motoverse roars into life.

Slide School is exactly as the name suggests: a taste of good ol' flat track-style riding and racing!

Dave (far right) celebrates making it to Goa with Mark Wells (top centre) and Phil, Shawn and Arbydas from the Royal Enfield engineering team.

The legendary Wall of Death is alive and well at Motoverse. It's amazing to watch these guys do their thing while riding entirely horizontal.

RIDING TO MOTOVERSE IS A PILGRIMAGE, AND PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER INDIA WOULD BE DOING THE SAME THING.

By the end of the first day, I'd concluded that there were no cattle in the paddocks — they were all on the roads or freeways! That said, they were well-behaved, as were the dogs and monkeys. Most of the time, anyway. Unless they were fighting.

Aside from one brilliant 80km off-road trail through a tiger reserve, we spent two days blasting across the continent on a combination of country back lanes and freeways. The pace finally slowed as we hit the good stuff — riding up India's western coast to Goa.

CATCH A TIGER BY THE TAIL

About 60 people a year are eaten by tigers in India, far fewer than the 600 killed by elephants. But that wasn't exactly comforting as we navigated a jungle trail where we knew someone had recently been killed.

Before entering the trail, a park ranger made it crystal clear that stopping could prove fatal. Your entry time was recorded and compared to your exit time, with fines imposed on those who took too long.

The track was rough and, at times, completely blocked by large, muddy puddles that could've been bottomless. Normally I'd be worried about sinking my bike, but thinking about both sinking the bike and becoming a tiger's dinner had my sphincter twitching.

On two consecutive nights we rode in the dark, something I'd seriously never recommend. About a third of the cars and bikes had no lights. Cars with one headlight out were particularly dangerous, as they could easily be mistaken for bikes. Actually, forget about the tigers — night riding was the most dangerous part of the trip.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

We arrived on the west coast at the end of day two. Mark messaged me to advise

02

he had landed on the east coast and was planning to ride a 700km transcontinental all-nighter to catch up with us. Insane enough given he'd just gotten off a ten-hour flight, but even crazier when you consider the riding conditions I'd experienced.

Sure enough, at 9am on day three, he arrived at my doorstep ready to ride. He was on a Himalayan and brought two other 'pilgrims' — Phil on a Super Meteor 650 and Arbydas on an Interceptor 650.

Phil and Arbydas, who are also engineers at Royal Enfield, are working on the development of electric bikes and had plans to showcase their work at Motoverse.

MONKEY BUSINESS

Over the next couple of days, we rode slowly north, frequently diving into the hinterlands to savour pristine, twisty tarmac. I was amazed at its quality — nothing I'd ever seen in the Himalayas compared. The mountains provided respite from the heat and humidity, being surprisingly tall and cool.

I'll admit road riding isn't my strength, but I lapped it up. Mark's enthusiasm for the stuff was unparalleled. He's a skilled road rider and, like me, obsessed with off-road adventure.

The Himalayans performed admirably on tarmac, offering great brakes, a decent engine and fun handling in the twisties. The boys set a fast pace on the black-top, with sparks flying from Phil's bike on tighter corners. Then Sean binned his Himalayan on a sweeping left-hand corner. A slow front-wheel leak caused a wash-out, the same issue that delayed him at the start. He was lucky to walk away with only soft tissue damage to his thigh.

Believe it or not, two fighting monkeys fell out of a tree onto the road in front of me. There was no time to brake. If not for their agility, they would've been roadkill. It was close, and I reckon they'll be sh*tting bananas for a week.

The final kilometres into Goa were unforgettable. The traffic was the most insane I'd experienced in India — even crazier than Delhi. Bikes and cars crushed into narrow bridge access points. During one of these crushes, Phil drove headlong into a portable road barrier and launched over the handlebars. Falling onto the road was bad enough, but the possibility of 1.2 billion people running you over before you could get up was worse!

WELCOME TO GOA

Our ride ended at the infamous Mango Tree Restaurant and Bar, where we celebrated

03

01: Dave gets the chance to throw a leg over Royal Enfield's prototype electric-powered Himalayan. **02:** Custom bikes are a huge part of the culture at Motoverse. **03:** Monkeys might be cute, but when they fall out of a tree while fighting, be ready to take evasive action! **04:** As an experienced 'Crash Test Dummy', Shawn could give the thumbs-up after suffering a front-end wash-out on the tar.

04

Royal Enfield owner Siddharth Lal displays the new Goan Classic 350 to the adoring Motoverse crowd.

with a few beers and a photograph before stage two of the tour: Motoverse!

I spent the next few days in Goa admiring the Portuguese influence in this rich city. The seafood on offer was amazing and in the old quarter, homes painted yellow, white and light blue were shaded by coconut palms and lush vegetation. It was easy on the eyes.

Out in the foothills of Goa, I sampled off-road riding and promptly got stuck in a mud hole, entirely unaware that a herd of water buffalo was watching me from a nearby pond. Hot, humid riding isn't really my thing.

MOTOVERSE TO EXCESS

Finally, Motoverse began. As I approached the entry, the rhythmic sound of drums and motorcycle engines revving in unison caught my attention. They were tuning their carburettors to backfire in rhythm — It was crazy stuff, but done so well!

Large groups of motorcyclists were heading in the same direction, many wearing bright, vibrant colours, not like the outlaw motorcycle gangs in Australia. These were motorcycle enthusiast clubs, the riders hanging out and loving their bikes.

At the gate, the clubs were lined up. Bikes were everywhere and the vibe was electric. Positive, happy energy filled the air. Many riders bobbed in unison to the throbbing engines and drums as they patiently waited for entry. An impressive start — and I hadn't even gotten inside yet!

Motoverse sprawled over 10 acres and featured four main activities. Motorcycle racing and learning included a slide track, dirt track, hill climb and the infamous wall of death. There were slow races and gymkhana-style events open to anyone, provided their bikes passed scrutiny. The competitions were entertaining, with a surprising depth of skilled riders, especially in dirt racing.

A learning track was set up for dirt skills instruction, with off-road coaches overseeing participants. Road and adventure tours into Goa's foothills were also staged from here.

Motoreel and Royal Enfield Adventure sections hosted talks and presentations by well-known riders worldwide. I even gave a talk myself! The latest Royal Enfield Scram was also launched here.

Motoverse celebrated all forms of moto-culture. The art competition was a hit, and the massive Moto Sonic stage showcased brilliant bands and stunning light shows. Enfield's top brass also revealed recently announced models, like the gorgeous Goan Classic 350.

HIGH ON THE TWO-WHEEL LIFE

I left Motoverse on a high. This celebration of moto-culture reignited my deep passion for motorcycles and the people who love them. I haven't experienced such an intense, positive vibe since I can remember. It reaffirmed my belief that the language of motorcycles effortlessly transcends community, culture and national borders. That's no mean feat for a bike festival, but Royal Enfield nailed it. **AAB**

The new-model Royal Enfield Scram was officially unveiled at Motoverse.

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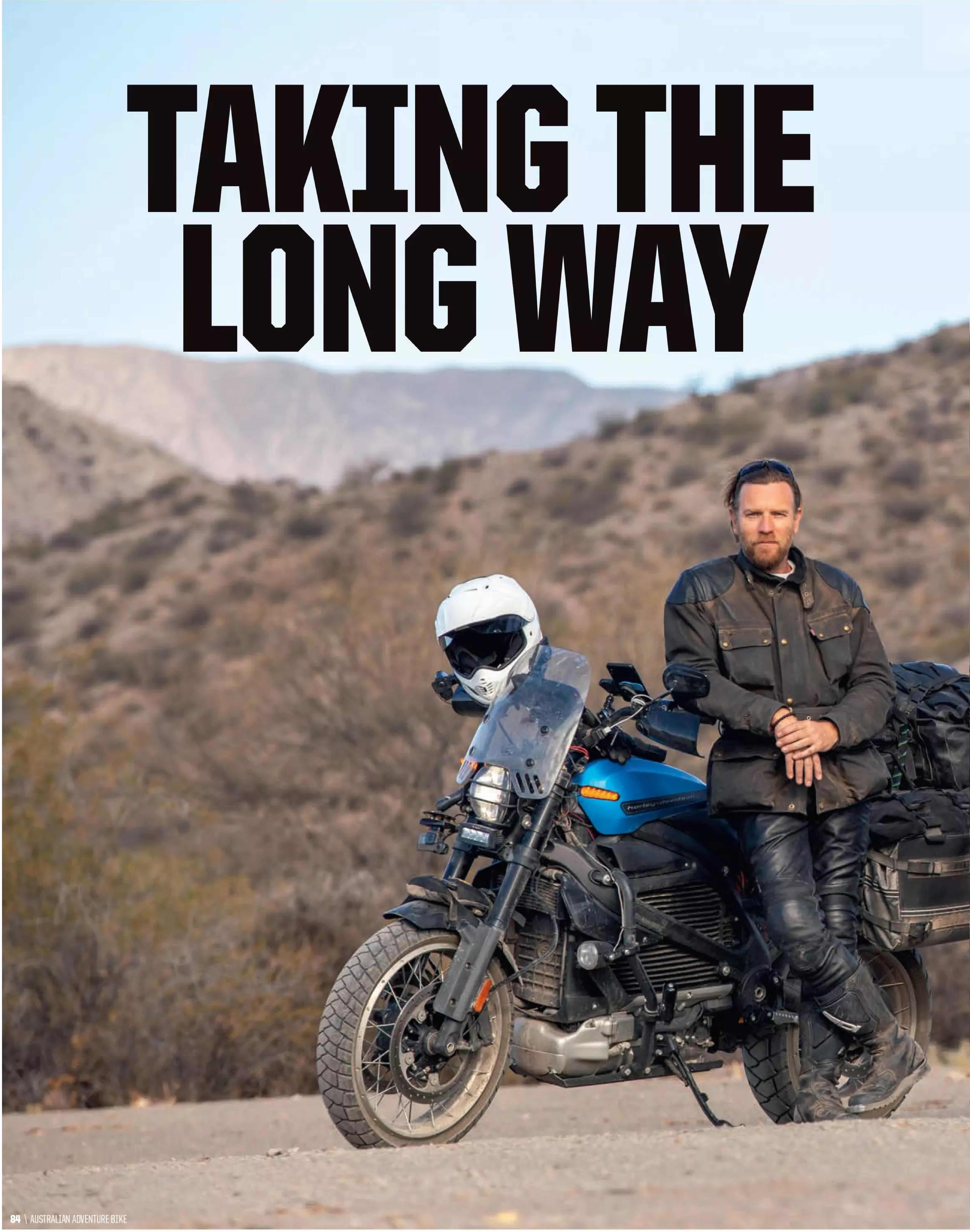
TAKING THE LONG WAY



Charley Boorman needs no introduction to adventure riders. Alongside his great mate, actor Ewan McGregor, their *Long Way Round*, *Long Way Down* and *Long Way Up* TV documentary travel series have inspired an entire generation of ADV riders. We caught up with Charley during his recent visit to Australia to host a guided riding tour through Tasmania, Victoria and NSW with Compass Expeditions.

STORY **ANDREW CLUBB** PHOTOGRAPHY **COURTESY CHARLEY BOORMAN**

Check out this pair of livewires! Not just the bikes, but the riders as well. Charley Boorman (right) and his best mate Ewan McGregor have combined to inspire an entire generation of ADV riders with their *Long Way Round*, *Up* and *Down* TV documentary series. And *Long Way Home* is set to premiere soon.

Mein host! Charley (front) hosts guided riding tours in Africa and Australia in conjunction with Compass Expeditions.

FIRST THINGS FIRST: WHERE DID THE CHARLEY BOORMAN AND MOTORCYCLES STORY BEGIN?

My father John is a film director, and back in the early 1970s he made a movie with Sean Connery, and it turned out Sean and his family would live with us in Ireland for a time. Sean's son Jason wound up being one of my closest friends and back then we found an old Honda Monkey bike in a stables, so we spent time getting it going again. When it ran, Jason kept riding it until finally he gave me a go. So I jumped on it, and my dad and Sean were standing in the paddock watching, and as I went sailing past them, my dad reached out and grabbed me by the hair and yanked me off the bike! I was left there hanging by my hair, as the bike went careening into a barbed wire fence!

You'd be jumping for joy too about riding a Ducati Multistrada V4 Rally around Tasmania, Victoria and NSW.

THAT'S A FIRST RIDE TO REMEMBER! BUT CLEARLY THE EXPERIENCE DIDN'T TURN YOU OFF BIKES?

No, it didn't. We lived on a farm in Ireland and as a kid it was a great life. I had another friend named Tommy, who lived in the local village and he had a Maico 400, which was an amazing bike of the time. I was around nine years old and I kept badgering him for a ride, until he finally relented and gave me a go. But I couldn't even reach the footpegs, so he put it into gear for me and pushed me off … and I rode around the paddock until I eventually fell over.

THEY'RE GREAT MEMORIES.

They really are. Back then my dad was into horse riding and I did a lot of that too, but I soon figured horses were a lot of work, with cleaning, feeding and looking after them. Whereas bikes you could just fuel up and go riding, then lean them against a wall when you were finished.

Where we lived was pretty remote, and we could just head off and ride bikes in the mountains. We'd strap an extra fuel drum on and off we'd go. They were real adventures and it made for a pretty amazing childhood.

WHEN DID YOU START TO FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU MIGHT DO FOR YOUR LIFE?

From an early age I was always around movies and film sets. My father filmed *Deliverance*, and I remember being a kid and Dad saying to me, "Go and sit on that sofa with that bloke and we'll film." The bloke just happened to be Jon Voight. My father gave me a tricycle for playing that 'role', so maybe that was my first inkling of a career? But the thing is, I was dyslexic and I really struggled with school, but I could act, although it made learning lines difficult. But by the time I was 16, I was acting and actually making something of a living, and was travelling overseas and even wound up based in Paris for a while with Jason, and we were having some good times.

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JOHN O' GROATS T

Best buds: Charley met Ewan on a movie set and they have been great mates and ridden bikes all around the world in the past 20 years.

"THEN ONE DAY EWAN SAID HE HAD THIS IDEA AND ASKED ME TO COME TO HIS HOUSE TO TALK ABOUT IT. THAT'S HOW *LONG WAY* BEGAN."

Fill 'er up! Chomping through the miles in the middle of nowhere in their first series, *Long Way Round.*

BUT YOU WERE STILL KEEN ON BIKES?
Of course. I really got into road bikes when I was around 20 and started buying sports bikes, because as a young bloke, that's what you do! I was doing track days and getting pretty obsessed with it all, but in the meantime my acting career wasn't going very well. Being dyslexic made it hard and I was stressing out, to the point where I didn't enjoy acting any more.

SO WHAT DID YOU DO?
I spent the next ten years painting and decorating people's houses! I call them my lean years! But through that time I was making the occasional movie, trying to keep that dream alive, and in that time I met Ewan on a movie set and we became great friends.

WHAT WAS THE MOVIE?
It was called *The Serpent's Kiss* and it starred Peter Postelthwaite, Greta Scacchi, Ewan McGregor and me! I thought this was brilliant and maybe I could actually become somebody, but the film came out and nobody watched it and it went straight to DVD. And then it was gone! That was the extent of my movie comeback.

BUT IT WAS THE START OF AN AMAZING FRIENDSHIP WITH EWAN?
We actually started running a motorcycle team in British Superbike and Superstock racing and we took it all quite seriously. Although truth be told, we were always hooning about with bikes. And then one day Ewan said he had this idea and asked me to come to his house to talk about it. That's how *Long Way* began.

AND THE REST, AS THEY SAY, IS HISTORY?
That's right. 20 years ago it was just a germ of an idea. I remember talking about it with Ewan at the very start, and that first trip was going to require four months away on the road, and I quickly realised I didn't have the money to do it, and I told Ewan that.

But then someone we told about the trip said that it would make a great book and we should approach a publisher for support. Which sounded great, but neither of us knew how to write a book! So then we thought we would do video diaries and then we could get someone to use that to help write the book. And then we realised that if we were going to do video diaries, why wouldn't we film the whole trip and make a documentary for television? But selling the concept was really hard work.

SO HOW DID YOU MAKE IT HAPPEN?
We got Russ Malkin involved, who was an experienced producer and director, and he was the one who actually found Claudio von Planta. We were struggling to find someone who could film and who could ride, and who

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“SOME PEOPLE ARE HAPPY TO STAY IN ONE PLACE FOREVER. BUT ME, I GET ITCHY FEET AND WANT TO TRAVEL.”

Charley says he’s got nomadic blood in his veins and has to travel to experience places just like this.

Cameraman Claudio von Planta has been a vital cog in making the *Long Way* series such a success.

was crazy enough to come along and put up with everything that was going to happen. This kind of role is dime-a-dozen these days on YouTube, but back then, as a fly-on-the-wall documentary, it was a really big ask on someone. But Claudio came in and he was just amazing, and his camera work was simply brilliant, and we had the content to make it all work.

DID YOU EVER THINK *LONG WAY ROUND* WOULD BE SO WILDLY POPULAR?

We never anticipated it, although once a book publisher gave us money, we figured it must have been an okay idea to begin with. For a book, it’s great story of two mates going off around the world. But for TV, back then, there was a real question mark over the concept. They would ask: “What’s going to happen?” And we would say, “Well, we have no idea!” So we would just hope that something would happen, and is it turned out, it bloody well did!

I don’t think any of us realised what an adventure it was going to be. None of us had much of a clue. We’ve been at it for 20 years now and we still have no idea!

WAS MAKING THE SEQUEL *LONG WAY DOWN* EASIER?

People were more willing to sit and listen to what we were doing, so that helped make that side, the commercial side, of it easier. But as a project it was still quite difficult. TV is a difficult animal that is totally driven by the content. And it’s hard work getting the content, and by that I mean quality content. But all that said, we still have great fun doing it, and after just now doing *Long Way Home*, I can say we’ve just had the best time.

THE CHOICE OF LIVEWIRE ELECTRIC BIKES FOR *LONG WAY UP* SET A CAT AMONGST THE PIGEONS.

Back then there was loads of talk about electric bikes, and Ewan and I thought it was an interesting concept. But when we said ‘electric’, most people thought we were nuts and we wouldn’t be able to do it. But that just made us want to do it more, to prove everyone wrong. There’s electricity everywhere and just about every house in the world has a light bulb, but it was a challenge. And in the end it became a lot more about the charging than about where we were. Still, no one had ever done it and people would say, “You can’t ride a long way on an electric bike.” But then we would say, “Well, actually …”

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE OUT OF *ROUND*, *DOWN* AND *UP*?

I love all of them. And I love that the rides were so different and the continents we rode in, the cultures we experienced and the people we met are all so memorable. That’s what made the journeys. *Long Way Round* has so many memories because it was first and we were doing what no one had done before in terms of filming it and producing a TV series. Sure, loads of people had done the exact same ride before, but we were first to make a true documentary series for TV about it.

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TRIUMPH

FOR THE RIDE

Now for something completely different! *Long Way Home* is coming soon and Charley and Ewan's choice of bikes is interesting, to say the least.

Billy Ward (left) has been Charley's long-time manager and works behind the scenes to co-ordinate Charley Boorman rides, media tours, stage shows and corporate appearances.

Elephants
80 km/h

THE INSPIRATION YOU HAVE GIVEN SO MANY ADVENTURE BIKE RIDERS SINCE THEN IS TRULY ASTOUNDING.

What I think is lovely nowadays and is quite nice to know, is that right now people are out there doing exactly what Ewan and I did. And people will do it forever. I love that.

But you also have to appreciate that loads of others were doing it before we did. Ted Simons is the guy who inspired us. His book starts in chapter one with his bike broken down, leaning against a tree, but he's relaxed, knowing that someone will come along and help. But it's taken him a long time to learn that: that people are lovely and genuinely want to help. You end up meeting people and having another adventure that would never have happened had you not broken down.

DO YOU LOOK BACK FONDLY ON THE FACT YOU'VE CREATED A LIFE AND A CAREER BASED AROUND RIDING MOTORCYCLES AND TRAVELLING?

I have a lot to thank my father for, as we travelled a lot because his film work took him all around the world to some pretty exotic locations. Some people are happy to stay in one place forever. But me, I get itchy feet and want to travel. Part of the reason my acting career went downhill is that I kept choosing films because of their location, rather than the quality of the script. I've always had a kind of nomadic feel and itchy feet.

FINALLY, WHAT BRINGS YOU TO AUSTRALIA — MORE RIDING?

For some time now I've been working with Compass Expeditions to host guided motorcycle tours in Africa and Australia. This tour will take in Tasmania, the Victorian high country and southern NSW, and I know from previous experience the riding is sensational. That ride from Hobart to Strahan in Tasmania is just one of the best anywhere in the world. And I'm so lucky to have a relationship with Ducati and I'll be riding a Multistrada V4 Rally on the tour. Along the way we'll be doing meet-and-greet sessions at Ducati dealerships and other venues, and I can't wait to see the fans, because I am ever so grateful people come out to say hello. **AAB**

www.charleyboorman.com

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Welcome to Namibia! But hang on, is this actually the Flintstones' backyard? Because it sure looks like it! Sections of the 2024 BMW International GS Trophy featured topography that truly was out of the ordinary.

TROPHY HUNTERS

If ever there was an event that could be described as the Olympics of BMW motorcycle riding, it just has to be the BMW International GS Trophy. And for the past four instalments, Australia's Miles Davis has been an official marshal for the event. This is his story.

STORY **MILES DAVIS** PHOTOGRAPHY **BMW MOTORRAD**

The BMW International GS Trophy is a huge production, with 190 competitors and crew from 32 countries in Namibia for the 2024 edition.

During the back end of last year, I ventured deep into the wilds of southern Africa to a country called Namibia to take part in the ninth running of the BMW International GS Trophy event. My role at the event is to act as an official marshal, which means I am something of a 'tour guide', leading competitors through the route to each of the special stages.

Nambia was my fourth GS Trophy event, after attending previous events in Mongolia in 2018, New Zealand in 2020 and Albania in 2022.

WHAT IS THE GS TROPHY?

The GS Trophy is an international teams competition for BMW GS riders. It's part serious competition, part adventure ride and total huge GS global get-together!

To help get your head around this event, picture almost 190 people from 32 nations all over the world descending on a remote location to face off for the GS Trophy spoils. There are 22 national teams, which makes for a total of 60 competitors, with 48 men and 12 ladies. There are marshals, mechanics, media, film and photo crews, a helicopter, support vehicles — it's a proper show with a heck of an entourage!

The participating countries stage a qualifying event a year in advance to select the teams, and once selected the riders receive an all-expenses-paid trip to the GS Trophy, along with a kit bag full of riding gear, camping equipment and more.

An innovation for the 2024 event was the inclusion of two 'international' teams that would compete alongside the 20 national teams. One international team was all-male and the other all-female, and to earn a spot on these teams riders contested a qualifier at the BMW Motorrad Days event in Germany last year.

All competitors in Namibia rode specially-prepared R 1300 GS bikes complete with their name and national flag as part of a special graphics kit.

THE BIKES

Last year was a big one for new GS models, so BMW wanted to have both the new R 1300 GS and F 900 GS models represented at the International GS Trophy. For this event the marshals rode the 900 GS and competitors rode the 1300 GS. Both models were pretty stock, although the 900s had some flash gear fitted. Both models had Metzeler Karoo 4 tyres installed, some impressive event graphics, and for the first time Aussie-made Unifilter pre-filters were in place to help cope with the epic Namibian dust.

PRE-EVENT PREPARATION

I flew into Windhoek, Namibia, in advance of the event so as to join the event organisers and complete an early pre-ride of the entire course, which had been recce ridden a year in advance.

You bet Miles was smiling at the thought of two months in Namibia acting as a marshal in the GS Trophy and as a guide for the Follow the Trophy tours.

Once the pre-ride was complete, our motley crew of marshals assembled at Midgard Resort, which is an incredible facility about one hour out of the city. It's an old cattle station that has been turned into a truly flash resort and event venue, which was absolutely perfect for GS Trophy base camp.

Fifteen marshals are required in the event, and between us we represented ten different

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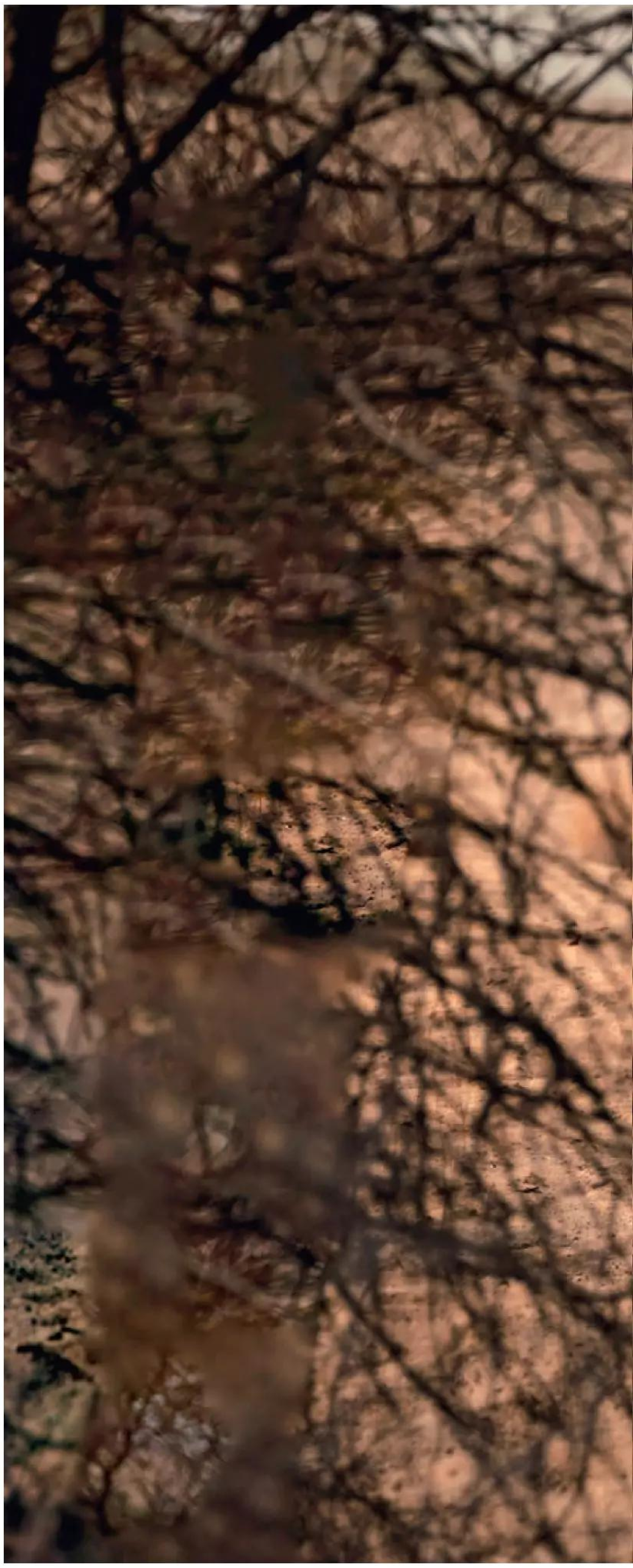

BMW MOTORRAD

Yes, those Unifilter pre-filters certainly did come in handy.

nationalities. Most of us are also now GS Trophy regulars, so each event is quite the reunion for us.

Over the next nine days we would do a comprehensive recce of the route and special stages with a film crew and support staff in tow. Different groups would take turns gathering footage of each day's ride, which would be used to preview daily stage briefings for competitors during the event as well as general promotional purposes.

VITAL STATISTICS

The International GS Trophy would be staged over six days of competition, with a total route distance of 1300km, more than 1100km of it off-road. There's an average of two special stages each day, and when they're not riding and competing, team riders and marshals stay in tents overnight.

To be honest, I didn't know much about Namibia before the event. But I did know that *Mad Max: Fury Road* had been filmed there, after the original plans to film in Australia had to be canned due to the Aussie outback being too green and lush due to unseasonal rains. Based on this I expected lots of sand, and that's what we got — along with some great gravel roads.

In fact, Namibia had been going through a very dry spell — the driest on record, some locals said. This meant lots of dust and lots of dry, sandy creek and river crossings. During my two-month stay in Namibia, there was basically zero moisture.

DAY 1: MIDGARD TO AI AIBA

A 270km opening day was the perfect introduction to the event. After the first special stage the course covered smooth gravel roads from the very first kilometre, which then turned rougher with some sandy sections before lunch. Then in the afternoon, a memorable special stage featuring a time trial in a dry and sandy riverbed really

You want sand? Namibia has heaps of the stuff, and the constant dry riverbed sections truly tested competitors.

showed who was comfortable on the sand and who wasn't!

After the special stage action there was a scenic gravel road section to Ai Aiba Lodge, which is an incredibly scenic game park set amongst some huge and intricate rock mountains. And yes, there was plenty of wildlife, including giraffes, zebras, oryx and impalas.

DAY 2: AI AIBA TO SPITZKOPPE

Shorter kays with a 184km route for day two, but no less action! We started with a morning loop within the game park, using some of their safari tour trail network. The dry tracks deteriorated quickly, and for the last groups it was a chopped-up, sandy, rutted mess that included some challenging long river crossings.

There were two special stages, one at the top of a crazy rock plateau. It was like we were riding to the top of a mountain on the planet Mars! By lunch many riders were exhausted, so some recovery was needed before hitting the afternoon session.

A mix of open gravel roads and desert tracks with one longer riverbed section were all features of the afternoon ride. It just kept going and some groups arrived in the dark to put up their tents.

Spitzkoppe is known as the Matterhorn of the desert as it is a huge and spectacular rock peak (the name translates to Sharp Peak in German).

DAY 3: SPITKOPPE DAY LOOP

Despite featuring just a 156km course, this was a tough day that included a long 35km

The locals were certainly friendly in Namibia.

Amazing views were an absolute constant in Namibia, but only when competitors had time to check the scenery.

The German team had plenty to smile about, snaring a big win in the men's category.

section through the dry and sandy Omaruru riverbed. It might have been a playground for the sand lovers, but at times it was absolute hell for the others. Even when you got out of the river, it wasn't much better, with chopped-up and rutted tracks before hitting some terra firma in the form of rocky gravel roads back to Spitzkoppe.

Once again, some teams really battled with the conditions and were late back to camp. The compounding fatigue was clearly a real challenge for some of the riders.

DAY 4: SPITZKOPPE TO SWAKOPMUND

With 224km on the agenda, this day started at a scenic desert location and finished by the seaside, which was an incredible contrast. There was also a 50km section through the sandy Khan River to navigate before exiting in Moon Valley, close to where *Mad Max* was filmed.

This was arguably the toughest day of the Trophy. The call was made to give the ladies an easier route that cut out some of the riverbed, but not all of it. This was a good call given the happenings of the prior two days. Still, the day presented more great but tough riding, with a final 40km road section to the coast offering some relief from the sand and rocks. Ambient temperatures for the day ranged between 15 and 38 degrees centigrade, which was pretty much a constant for the week.

DAY 5: SWAKOPMUND TO MIDGUARD

This was a pretty easy but long day of around 420km, much of it similar to some Aussie outback riding. There were straight roads leading to straight gravel, followed by rolling

A dozen female riders qualified for the International GS Trophy and you bet they were stoked to make the finish and claim their awards.

Miles (second from left) dons the local attire for another night of socialising with his fellow marshals.

Do you reckon competitors had eaten enough sand sandwiches by the end of the event?

hills that reminded me of the Flinders Ranges. We had a lunch and fuel stop at a private camp in the hills, followed by more interesting gravel roads into the capital city of Windhoek and back to the Midgard base camp.

DAY 6: MIDGARD LOOP

The sixth and last day of competition featured a 50km loop ride and a final special stage. In the overall standings, Germany was leading the men's category and were looking strong, while the lead in the women's category had been chopping and changing.

The morning loop was within the camp property and featured amazing fire trails that wound up and down, with what felt like 100 perfectly-sculpted erosion humps for entertainment! After the loop and lunch it all came down to the final special stage spectacular, which delivered a large course with multiple challenges including natural wall rides, slow riding, ramps and slalom.

Ultimately, the German men came away with the top prize, while in the women's category the International team finally took the honours.

WRAP IT UP

The BMW International GS Trophy brings together people from all around the world who share a love of adventure riding. It is quite amazing to see and feel the energy and passion amongst all involved. It is a competition, but really, all of the competitors are winners simply for making it to the event.

Details of the 2026 International GS Trophy event have not yet been released, but I know there are already hundreds of riders from all over the world waiting to hear what exotic location will be next!

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE

Immediately after the GS Trophy, six Follow the Trophy Tours took place, using the same bikes from the competition. Many of the same staff were involved as guides and support crew, and the route covered the majority of the GS Trophy course.

I was a tour guide on two tours. The first was with some regular FTT customers from Colombia and Spain who I have ridden with at the last four events. The second tour had a few Aussie BMW Safari customers as well as riders from Singapore and France.

Instead of roughing it in tents, FTT customers had top-shelf accommodation at amazing lodges, and they also had the chance to ride the epic dune network at Swakopmund. For many, this was the highlight of what surely was the ride of a lifetime! **AAB**

CODE BLACK

When you're an ADV wingman, you've always got your riding buddy's back. No matter whether it's fixing a flat out the back of Tibooburra or bolting on a new bash plate at home in the shed … it's the ADV wingman's code!

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY **ANDREW CLUBB**

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103

PROJECT BIKE: ROYAL ENFIELD HIMALAYAN

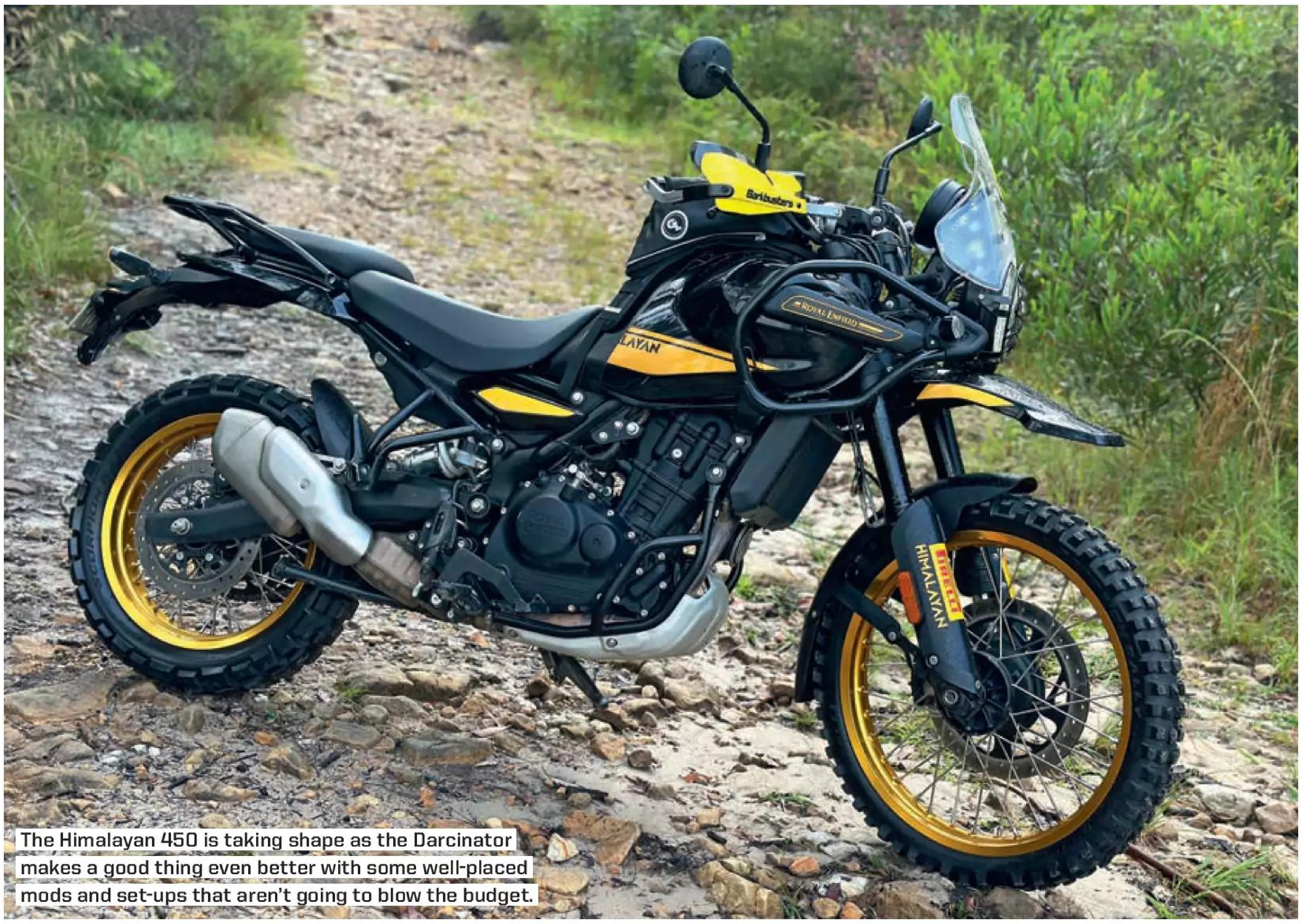
When you ride a Royal Enfield Himalayan 450, don't be shy to head way out west and rack up the big miles. No matter whether it's the Turon River or the wide expanses of Tibooburra, the Himalayan 450 will take you there.

It's the unwritten rule of the ADV rider wingman's code book: No matter when, no matter where, the ADV wingman is always there.

But at 8.47pm on a Tuesday night, the Darcinator was pushing the friendship. I knew he wasn't away on a ride, so I politely wondered to myself, *What's going on at MAD TV HQ?* as I reached for my phone to read his text message. "Mate, I can't figure out this bloody bash plate! Are you a chance to come take a look at it?!"

That explained it: Tool Man Dave and his trusty shammer (that's a half-shifter/half-hammer Swiss army tool, for the uninitiated) were in a world of technical hurt.

Clubbman to the rescue!



The Himalayan 450 is taking shape as the Darcinator makes a good thing even better with some well-placed mods and set-ups that aren't going to blow the budget.

SHAMMER-TIME!

I know Dave had been waiting a while for Royal Enfield's accessory Rally bash plate to fit to the Himalayan 450 long-termer and help boost protection of the Indian ADVer's undercarriage.

As I duly strolled into the MAD-TV shed, resplendent in my OH&S savvy crocs and socks footwear, I was greeted by the sight of Dave rolling on the floor whilst trying to hold two engine crash bars, a bash plate and a box of fiddly little fasteners.

"I dunno what's going on, but this bloody thing just doesn't fit!" he barked.

"Give me the shammer, will ya?" he continued emphatically. "I'll give this crash bar a belt and bend it into shape …"

"Patience, Grasshopper," I proffered, as I lowered my hulking frame to the floor for a closer look, and we both tried in vain to squeeze our guts under the Himalayan's sump plug.

"There's your problem right there!" I cried. "That right-side crash bar is way out of line — where's the shammer? We can whack it into shape!"

"That's what I said!" Darcy barked back. "Get out of the way …"

Talk about the blind leading the blind.

It was at this point I asked out loud: "But you have read the instructions, right?"

"There were no bloody instructions!" Dave bellowed.

And that right there is the crux of this technical conundrum. There are no instructions in the box for how to fit the bash plate. No, they are actually ON the box. On the outside of the box, in the form of a QR code to scan, alongside a message advising: "Scan code for fitting instructions."

Only thing was, the packing tape used to seal the box for shipping covered the QR code, so Dave never saw it. And I never saw it. In fact we only ever saw it after the crew at UMI, the Aussie Royal Enfield distributor, told us to go look for it. Right.

And what do you know? We scan the code, click through the links to the bash plate, and a glorious YouTube video takes us right through the installation process step-by-step. Hallelujah! Put the shammer back in its holster.

THE ROYAL TREATMENT

When we ultimately fitted up the Rally bash plate, it was clear the dual crash bars and aluminium bash plate set-up offers a serious boost in protection compared to the Himalayan's standard plastic bash plate. The crash bars are frame-mounted and offer real protection of the engine cases, and the bash plate then mounts to the bars. While the crash bars are strong steel, the bash plate material is still light aluminium, not the more rugged material you find on true off-road bash plates. Royal Enfield's Rally bash plate is priced at $380.

Now, the install trick is getting the rear fixing point of the right-side crash bar correct — you actually have to remove the footpeg and rear brake pedal and fit the crash bar to a hole in the main frame. Now you know! And while you are soaking up info, be sure to follow the torque setting instructions for all the crash bar fasteners — that's important.

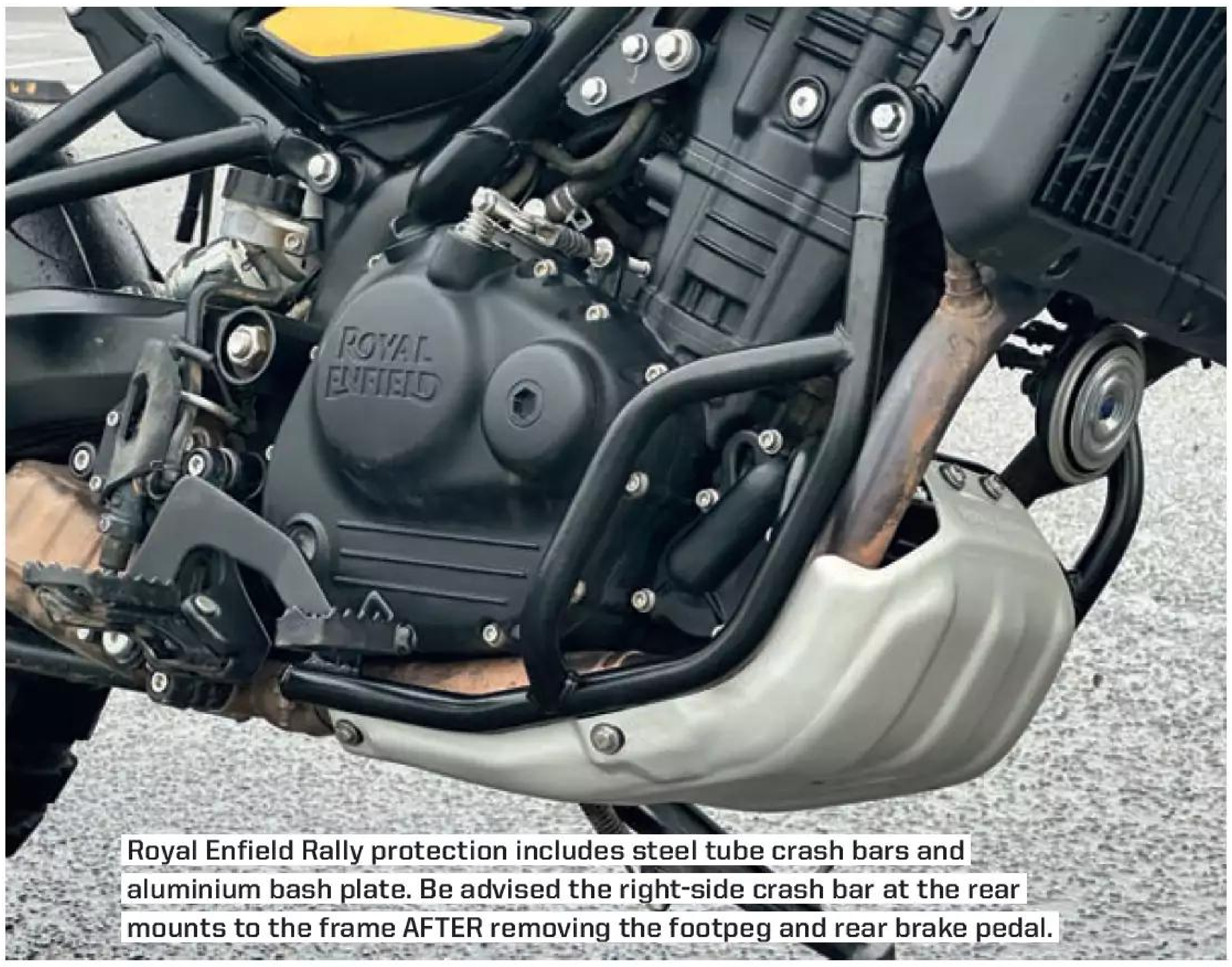
Royal Enfield bar pad offers added protection for the pilot.

Continuing the theme of added protection for the Himalayan, Dave had successfully — and single-handedly, he proudly noted — fitted a few more goodies from the Royal Enfield accessory catalogue, including a black wire headlight grille ($150) and a black Rally handlebar pad ($81). He also installed a taller Adventure screen ($170), which is a straight swap for the shorter stock screen and provides added protection for the rider from wind blast. All Royal Enfield accessories can be ordered through your local Royal Enfield dealer.

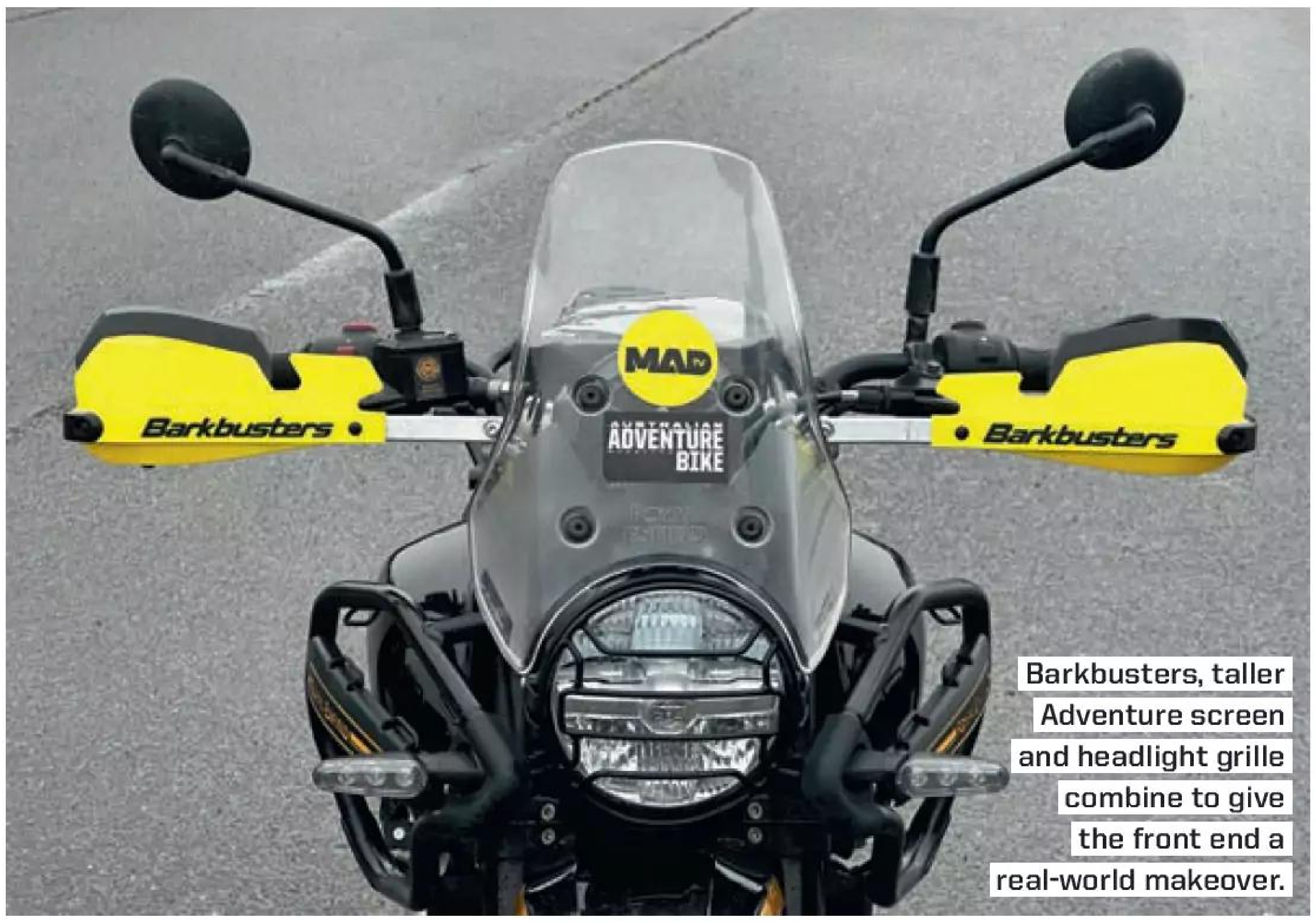
www.royalenfield.com.au

BARKING MAD

The Himalayan 450 rolls off the showroom floor without any protection of the handlebar ends and controls, and this is one of the first set-ups any owner should make. Dave's chosen Aussie-made Barkbusters for the 450, running full-wrap alloy backbones ($149.95) and VPS plastics ($53.90), in a bright yellow and black combo that absolutely pops against the black and gold colours of the Himalayan. The backbones come with specific mounting hardware that makes them a straight-forward bolt-on proposition. Barkbusters are available at bike shops everywhere. **www.barkbusters.net**



Royal Enfield Rally protection includes steel tube crash bars and aluminium bash plate. Be advised the right-side crash bar at the rear mounts to the frame AFTER removing the footpeg and rear brake pedal.



Barkbusters, taller Adventure screen and headlight grille combine to give the front end a real-world makeover.

RUBBER UP

With almost 5000km on them, the time is nigh to fit a fresh set of Pirelli Scorpion Rally Race tyres to the Himalayan. They're brilliant tyres for Aussie adventure riding conditions as they work well on the tar for a knobby design and are seriously good in the dirt. They're priced at $209.95 for the 90/90x21 front and $399.95 for the 140/80x18 rear, and they're available at bike shops everywhere. **www.linkint.com.au**

BREATHE DEEPLY

Another first mod Himalayan 450 owners should consider is swapping out the standard paper air filter element for an oiled foam element from Aussie brand Unifilter. The Unifilter is actually a two-stage filter and the yellow work filter can be removed from the element for easy cleaning. The Unifilter comes pre-oiled and is priced at $101.95. **www.uniflow.com.au**

RIDE ON

Thanks to the crew at Moto Machine, a leading Royal Enfield dealer based at Parramatta in western Sydney, the Himalayan's first service has recently been completed and the Indian-made ADV giant-killer is ready to roar on its next assignment. Let's ride! **AAB**

LEFT: Unifilter's oiled foam air filter element offers a big boost in air filtration over the stock paper element.

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EXPLORE NEW LEVELS.
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The CFMOTO 450 MT thrives on taking you into the unknown. It's the kind of bike where you're always busting to see what's at the end of the next trail.

MARKET LEADER

We've said from day one that the CFMOTO 450 MT truly does break new ground in the ADV world. And after racking up over 1000 sales in 2024, it's clear plenty of Aussie ADV riders agree.

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY **ANDREW CLUBB**

High-plains hauling under dawn's early sky. A three-day blaze from Sydney to the Monaro high plains of southern NSW with the DSMRA let the 450 MT show its true ADV colours.

First things first: let's give CFMOTO Australia due credit, for just as we were going to press with this issue of AAB, news came through that no less than 1000 450 MTs had been sold in Australia since the bike's arrival mid last year. And there are stacks more riders with orders in the queue and waiting for their bikes to arrive.

From the moment we first rode the 450 MT at the bike's world launch in the Philippines early last year, we knew it would strike a chord with Aussie riders. Performance and pricing under $10,000 ride-away were instantly in the 450 MT's favour, and it didn't take long for local riders to swarm toward it.

Initially the 450 MT was typically accompanied by the caveat 'for a bike this price', but it's actually grown to stand on its own two feet.

In one fell swoop, CFMOTO have gone a long way to dispelling many Aussie ADV riders' fears of 'China bike syndrome' — but as a brand, CFMOTO has been doing that with its road bikes, UTVs and SXSs for years. The 450 MT is more 'mainstream' than any Chinese-made ADV bike that's landed in Australia has ever been, simple as that.

SHARPEN THE PENCIL

Living with the 450 MT this issue, we fitted a high front guard from CFMOTO, plus they also supplied us with a centre stand, which makes chain maintenance and rear wheel removal so much more convenient. As we've fast discovered with genuine CFMOTO accessories, they're generally very sharply priced, and these two items were no different.

The high guard, which is supplied with a mounting bracket and fasteners, is priced at $159, while the centre stand is just $149.95 — yeah, we had did a double-take on that price too.

But one item we're still waiting for from CFMOTO is the optional high seat, which we reckon with its flat profile will improve the bike's ergos for riders like us at 180cm or more tall. The seat is priced at $199.95. CFMOTO admits some accessories for the 450 MT are on a lengthy back-order, due to demand for the bike and accessories right around the world, so keep knocking on your dealer's door for latest delivery schedules.

www.cfmoto.com.au

SERVICE DEPARTMENT

After the crew at southern Sydney CFMOTO dealer Trooper Lu's took care of the first 5000km service on our 450 MT last issue, all we've had on the workshop agenda this issue is chain and air filter maintenance.

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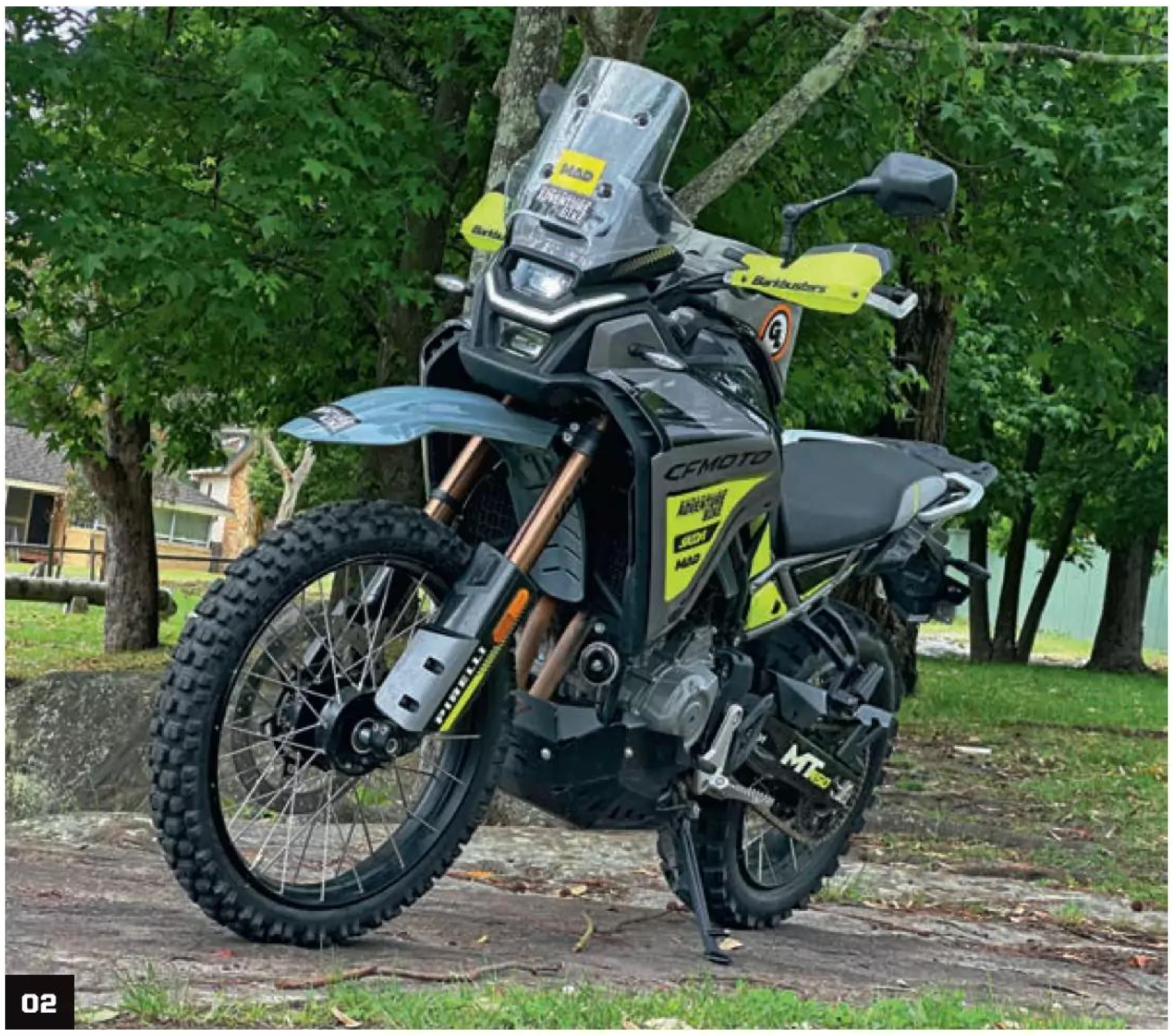
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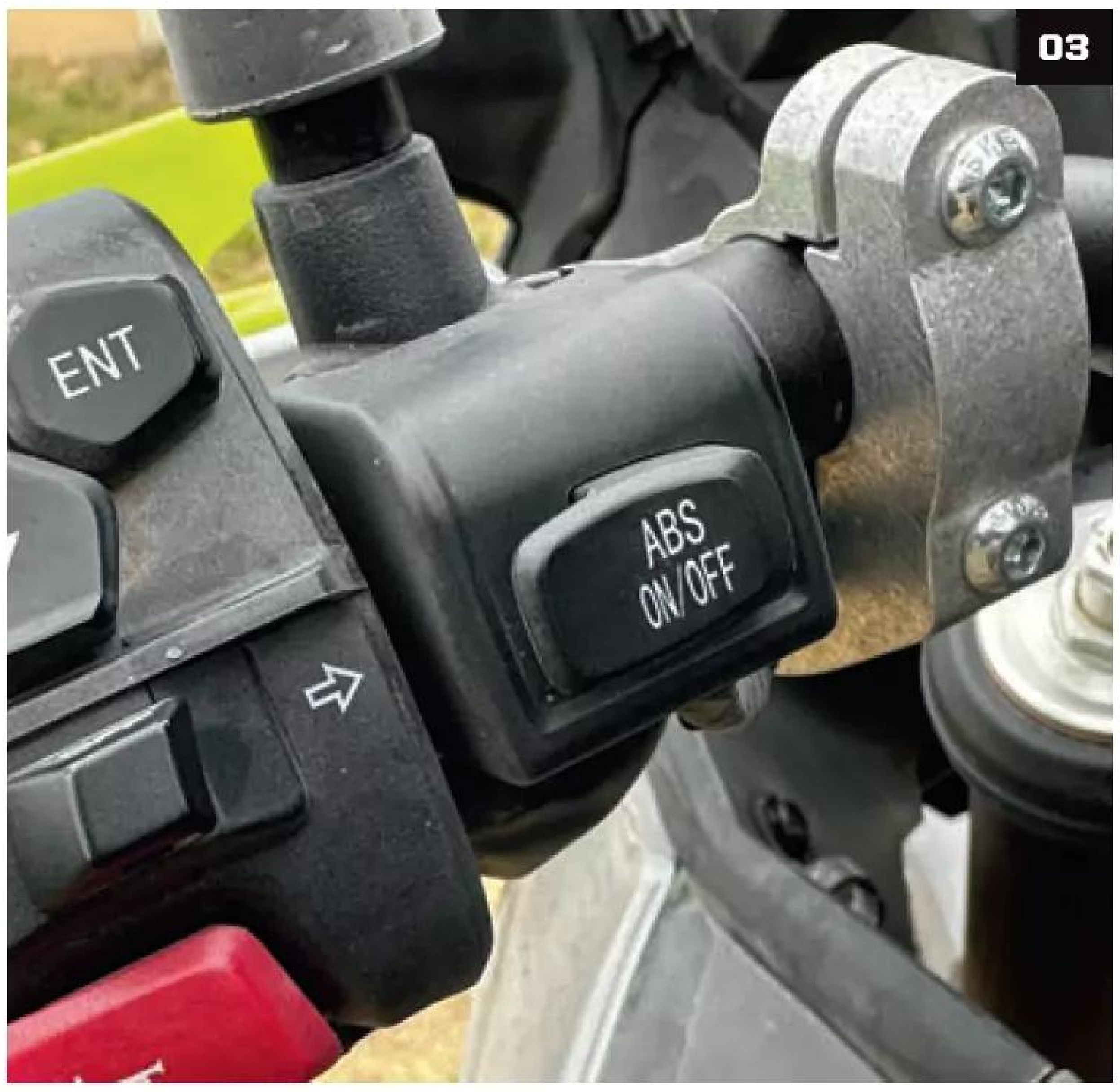
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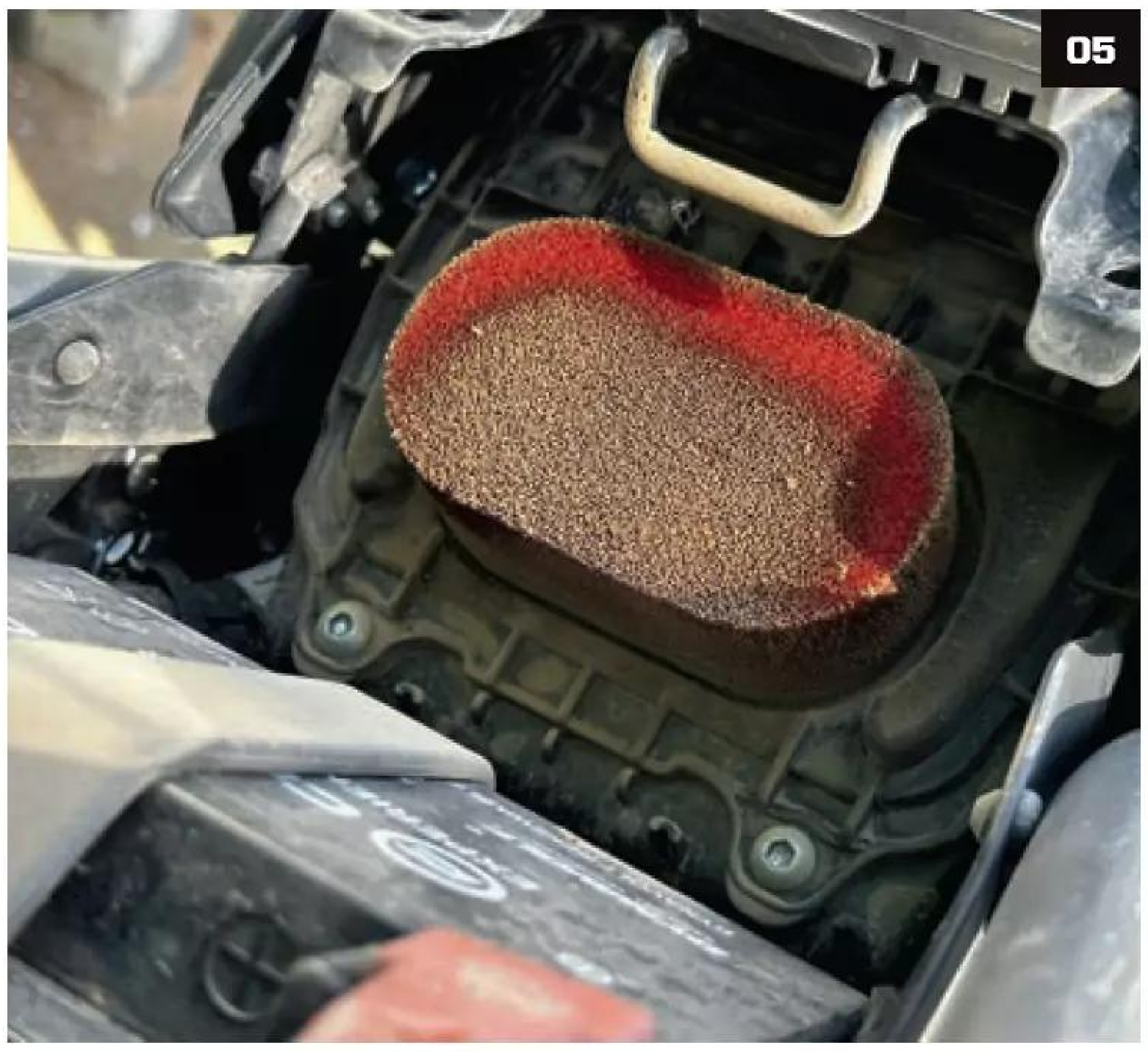
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The stock chain is doing fine at the 6000km mark, while having fitted a Unifilter oiled foam filter element and pre-filter has made air filter servicing all too easy. In fact, the pre-filter has been doing a great job and is so easy to remove, clean and refit. And it's so convenient that the pre-filter is small enough to carry a spare with you on long trips, ready to be swapped out whenever required.

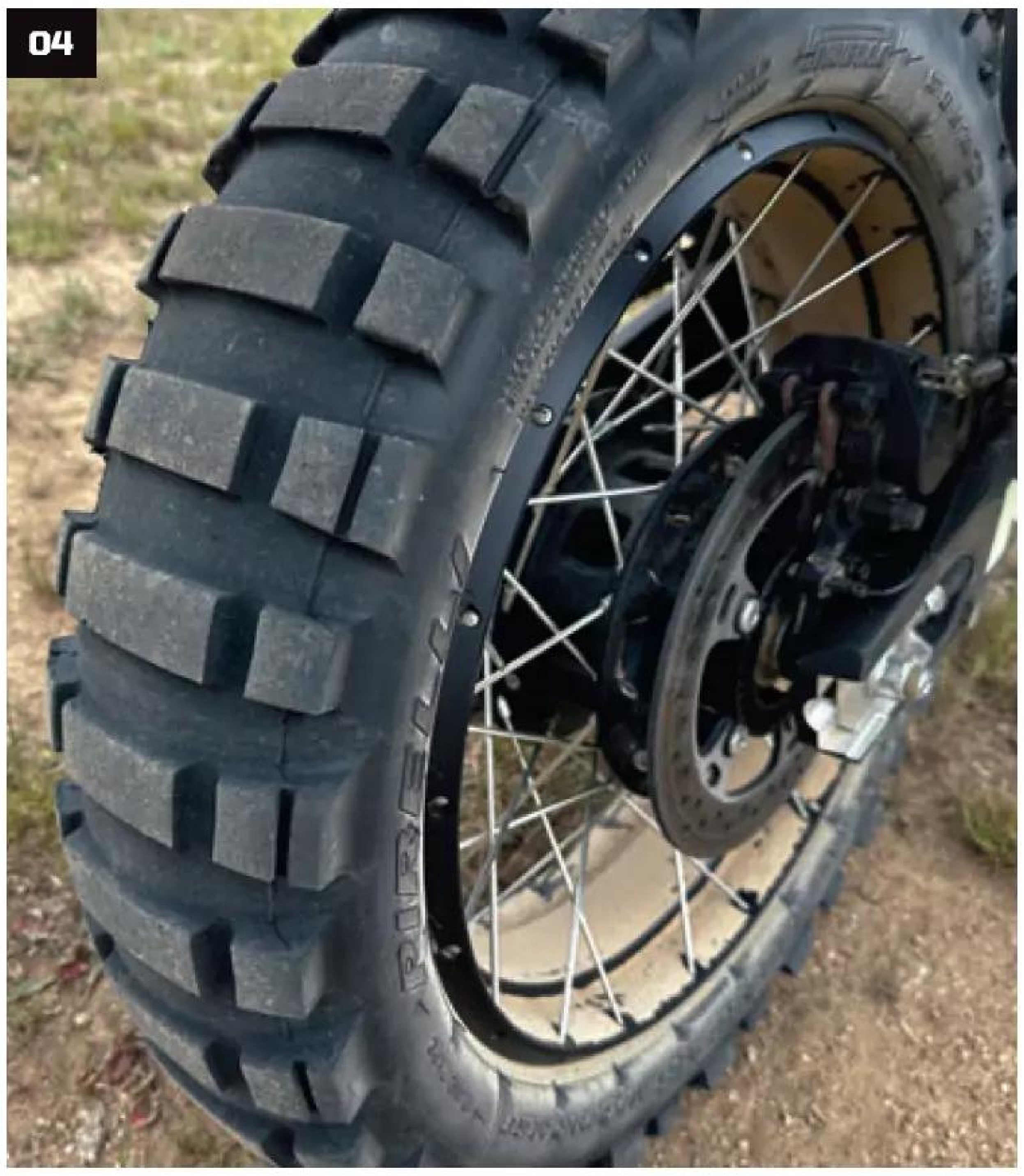
Next up, we will have to fit a fresh set of tyres soon as the Pirelli Scorpion Rally Race rubber have reached their use-by date now after just over 5000km of riding. The front scalloped out markedly in the last 1000km or so, while the rear is getting close to having no knob depth on the centre row. But they've been excellent tyres, not just on the dirt where they are so at home with their aggressive knob pattern, but also on the tar. It's so easy to appreciate why these tyres are so popular with dirt-biased Aussie ADV riders.

SNOW GOING BACK

A three-day 1500km run with the DSMRA Sydney branch on their annual Snowy Ride trip was the perfect outing for the 450 MT this issue.

The Monaro high plains around Cooma, Jindabyne and Bombala in southern NSW offer wide-open spaces and endless ADV riding, and while most of it is fast and open and therefore the domain of larger-capacity bikes, the 450 MT was never embarrassed on the Snowy Ride trip. Just let that little twin-cylinder engine sing, and dance the bike through the turns, and you'll have a smile on your dial at every regroup.

Former DSMRA president Tim Clarke, and Bilpin Moto Adventures instructor Dave Wilson, both had sessions in the saddle of the 450 MT over the weekend, and it's fair to say both were impressed by the CFMOTO's capabilities. Both climbed off the bike and agreed they could instantly understand what all the fuss is about and appreciate why the bike has proven so popular with so many Aussie ADV riders.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01: Former DSMRA president Tim Clarke is yet another rider to give the Chinese ADV machine the thumbs-up after a first test ride. **02:** We've just fitted CFMOTO's optional high front guard to our 450 MT long-termer. **03:** Off-road mode switch is one of the 450 MT's best technical features and can be switched on and off on-the-fly. Brilliant. **04:** We've covered over 5000km on the Pirelli Scorpion Rally Race rear tyre. **05:** Unifilter oiled foam filter element and pre-filter have proved their worth time and time again.

Which takes us back to our first ride on the 450 MT a year ago in the Philippines at the world launch, where it was so obvious the all-new twin-cylinder 450 just worked. It truly does break new ground and has without doubt shaken up the ADV world. And if you want proof of that, just look at the new crop of 450cc ADV bikes that are set to hit the streets … the small-bore revolution is real! **AAB**

ADVANCED BRAKING TIPS

An old adage suggests that you need to learn how to slow down to go faster. Maximising your braking techniques will go a long way to making you a safer and more confident rider, so let's dive into part two of Miles' tips on boosting your braking.

STORY **MILES DAVIS** PHOTOGRAPHY **ANDREW CLUBB**

Okay, it's time to get even more serious about honing your braking skills. Last issue we covered the basics of braking and looked into how bike set-up can help you stop more safely and with greater confidence. This issue I'm going to detail a couple of more advanced braking skills, as well as discuss the impact ABS (anti-lock brake system) has on modern-day machinery.

FRONT-BRAKE SKIDS

Practising front-brake skids is a more advanced exercise and to be honest, it can feel a little weird at first and might not be for everyone. The basic idea is to ride along in the standing position as slow as first gear will allow — with the clutch out — without stalling. Lean back so your weight is biased to the rear of the bike, and while you have a very small amount of throttle on, you need to gradually add some front brake and gently add throttle to maintain a consistent speed, just above the stall zone.

As you add front brake, the front tyre may start to skid slightly or lock up. As you feel the steering go vague, release or modulate the front brake to get the front wheel to turn so as to maintain stability. The ultimate goal is to have the front wheel partially skid but still be slightly turning for a metre or maybe two. The slight skid means you're close to the threshold, and the partially turning wheel means you still have some steering control.

The reason for practising this skill is not because it's an actual riding technique. It simply helps you understand how to react in a front-wheel lock-up situation.

IMPORTANT POINTS

When practising front-brake skids, the really important points are:

+ Don't try this while riding too fast. If the front wheel locks and you don't react quickly enough, you'll fall.
+ Look ahead: You need forward vision to optimise balance.
+ Cover your clutch: Adding front brake without compensating with the right amount of throttle may cause the engine to stall. If you sense a stall coming, use your clutch, abort the attempt and try again. Don't constantly slip your clutch doing this exercise or you may cook it.
+ Try not to accelerate: It's not about pushing throttle against brake and gaining speed. Try to keep the speed very consistent by being precise with your controls.
+ If you don't position your weight to the rear of the bike, this exercise is much harder. You may find that the front tyre grips and you actually get rear-wheel spin instead. If so, exaggerate your rearward body position to avoid this.

TRAIL BRAKING

Trail braking is another more advanced braking exercise. This technique is not always obvious to less experienced riders, but in most hard-braking cornering situations an advanced rider will use their front brake right into the apex of a corner.

The key here is the amount of brake pressure changes as the bike goes from vertical, where you can brake hard, and reduces gradually as the bike starts to lean into the corner, to the point where the bike hits the apex, the brake is released fully and then the throttle begins as you finish and exit the corner.

Trail braking doesn't come naturally to less experienced riders. Novices tend to brake moderately while upright, release the brakes before the corner, carry minimal corner speed and coast into the apex of the corner. There is nothing wrong with this, but it's a slower, less precise way for you to link corners together.

ABS HAS ITS PLACE

When it comes to road and adventure bikes, ABS is the future. However, understand that there are different levels of ABS quality and functionality. Some bikes have quite basic ABS systems, and usually these are designed for on-road use and sometimes can't be turned off, which can be a disadvantage for some off-road riding situations. Other systems have on- and off-road options and can let you lock up the back wheel while still having ABS active on the front wheel.

Since 2013 when the BMW R 1200 GS came out with riding modes and off-road ABS, I have found the system to be amazing both on-road and off-road. Prior to this the ABS system was more road-biased and I would deactivate it for off-road riding. But at the same time, many less experienced riders would leave this ABS on for the extra layer of protection it offered. So it really comes down to personal preference and understanding how the ABS system reacts to different situations and your riding style.

What's important to understand is that ABS doesn't replace technique. Riders with a higher level of brake control will definitely get the best result. But the ABS systems can be a great safety net for unexpected emergency situations.

So get out there, practise some skids and tune up those braking skills. The sharper you get, the better and safer your riding experience will be. **AAB**

Practise your front-brake skids and trail braking skills and one day you might just be barrel racing on a Rhino like a pro – just like Miles!

Front-brake skids demand concentration but are a proven way to learn the ultimate feel for your front brake's performance.

Miles' ADV skills sessions will always involve extensive attention to improving your braking technique, to help you ride more safely and with greater confidence.

CLICK 'N' RIDE

Understanding the suspension adjuster clickers on your bike's fork and shock will go a long way to helping you improve the quality of your ride.

STORY **CLIVE WARD/MOTORCYCLEBIZ**

Most modern motorcycles have a range of suspension adjustments that can make the bike more compatible to the rider's weight, speed, riding style and personal preferences. The bike can easily be made harder or softer, more stable or more agile, or more comfortable — the list goes on and on.

Most owner's manuals will offer a very basic 'How To' guide when it comes to setting up your bike and generally speaking will attempt to help steer you in the right direction.

Everyone can make their bike work better with a few tweaks to their suspension clickers. Even if you fall outside the so-called 'Average Rider' category, you can still make your bike better, you just may not get it perfect.

Many people are concerned that they may 'stuff things up' if they play with their suspension adjusters too much. But the truth is, you are not going to hurt anything by making adjustments — unless you are too heavy-handed and force something. So go easy on the tools if required, and make adjustments step by step.

SETTING YOUR SAG

Having a proper sag measurement on your adventure bike is the single most important factor to take into account when it comes to gaining an ideal suspension setup. From here, this will act as a baseline when tuning any other setting on the suspension.

In simple terms, static sag is the distance (or measurement) that the motorcycle settles under its own weight with both wheels on the ground. Furthermore, rider sag refers to the same measurement, but with the added weight of a fully-geared rider — and importantly, this is the number we should pay most of our attention to.

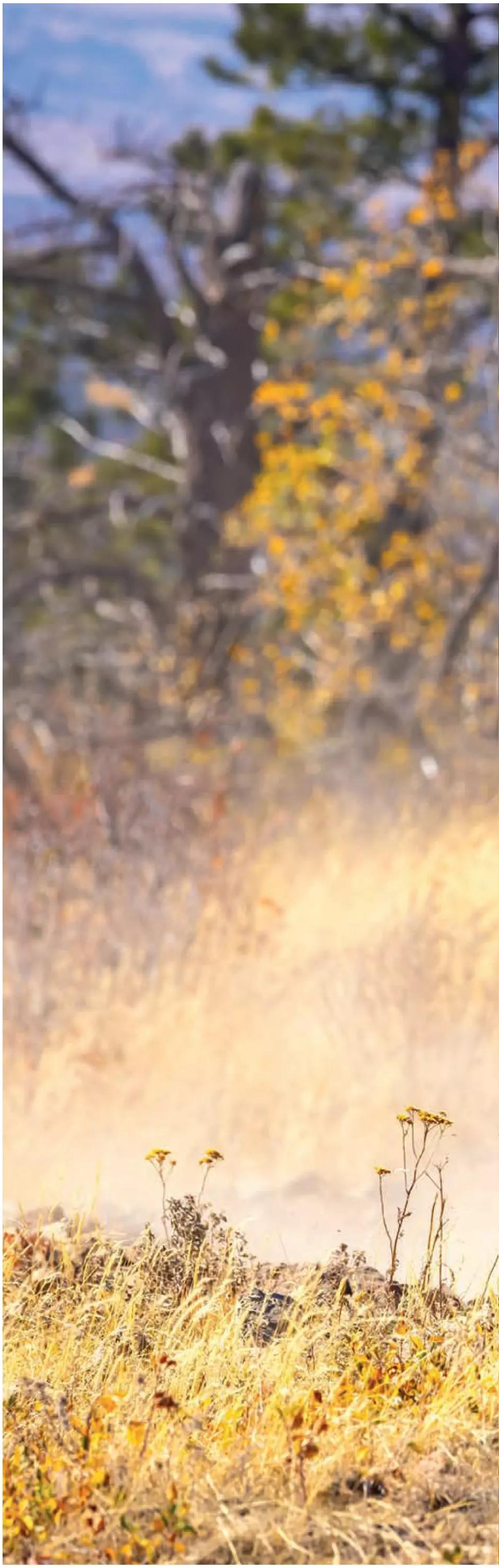
Having either too much or too little sag will affect the geometry of the motorcycle, which impacts its behaviour both on-road and off-road.

In general, most adventure motorcycles ride best with 30 per cent rider sag of the bike's total suspension travel. If your bike has 240mm suspension travel, you should aim to have 80mm of rider sag — simple.

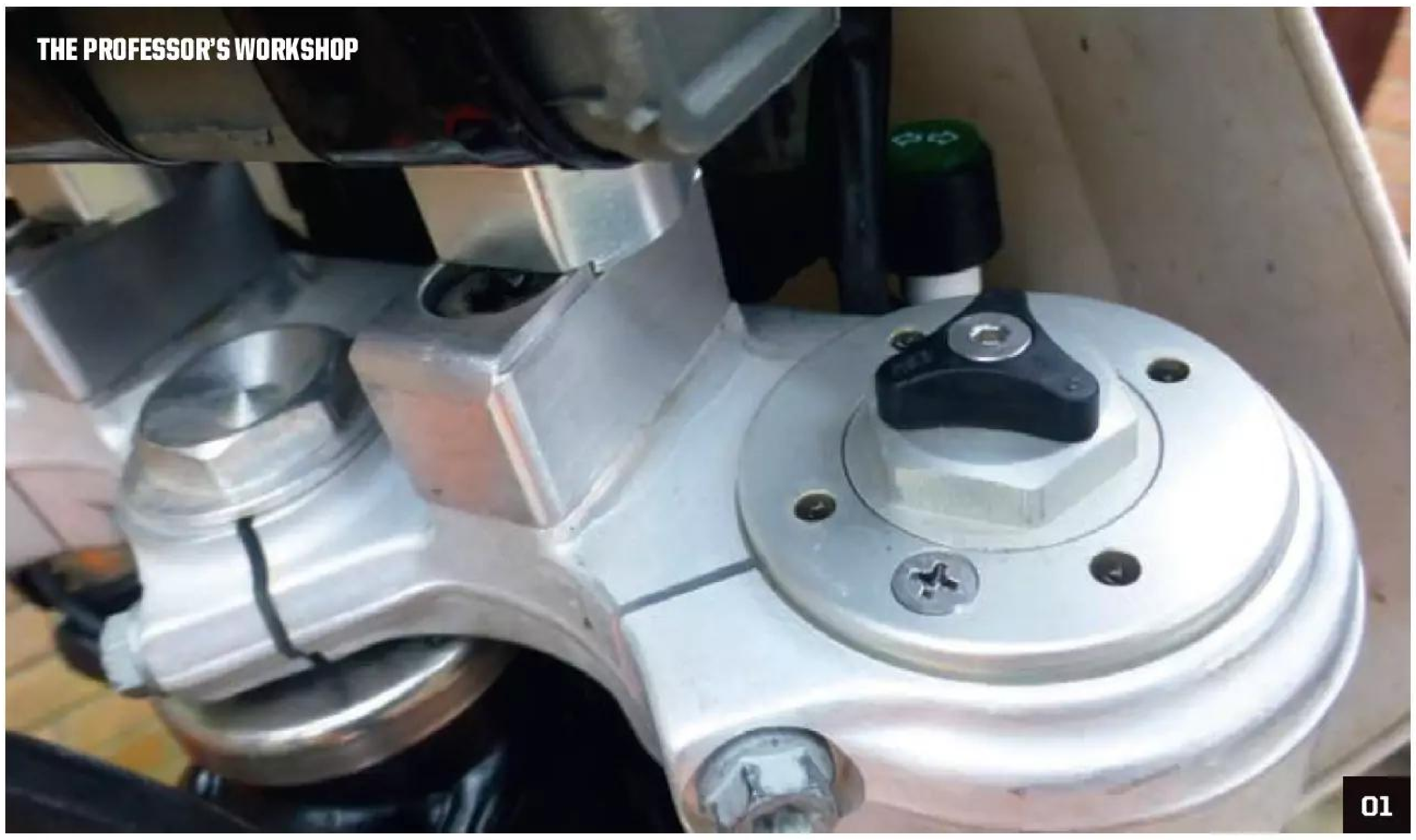
Now, remember that setting your sag isn't just a one-time operation. Especially when you're an ADV or dual-sport tourer, as adding weight (ie, luggage, camping gear, etc) to your bike is going to affect its sag numbers.

ADJUSTING YOUR SUSPENSION CLICKERS

The compression and rebound dampers on your ADV bike's suspension are also known as clickers, which are usually adjusted via a flat-head screwdriver. These clickers have the task of controlling the amount of oil that bypasses the internal valving stacks inside your forks and shock — see the accompanying illustrations.



When you're fully loaded and charging hard on techy off-road trails, having your suspension dialled will deliver a huge improvement in the quality of your ride. Photo: Simon Cudby/KTM USA.



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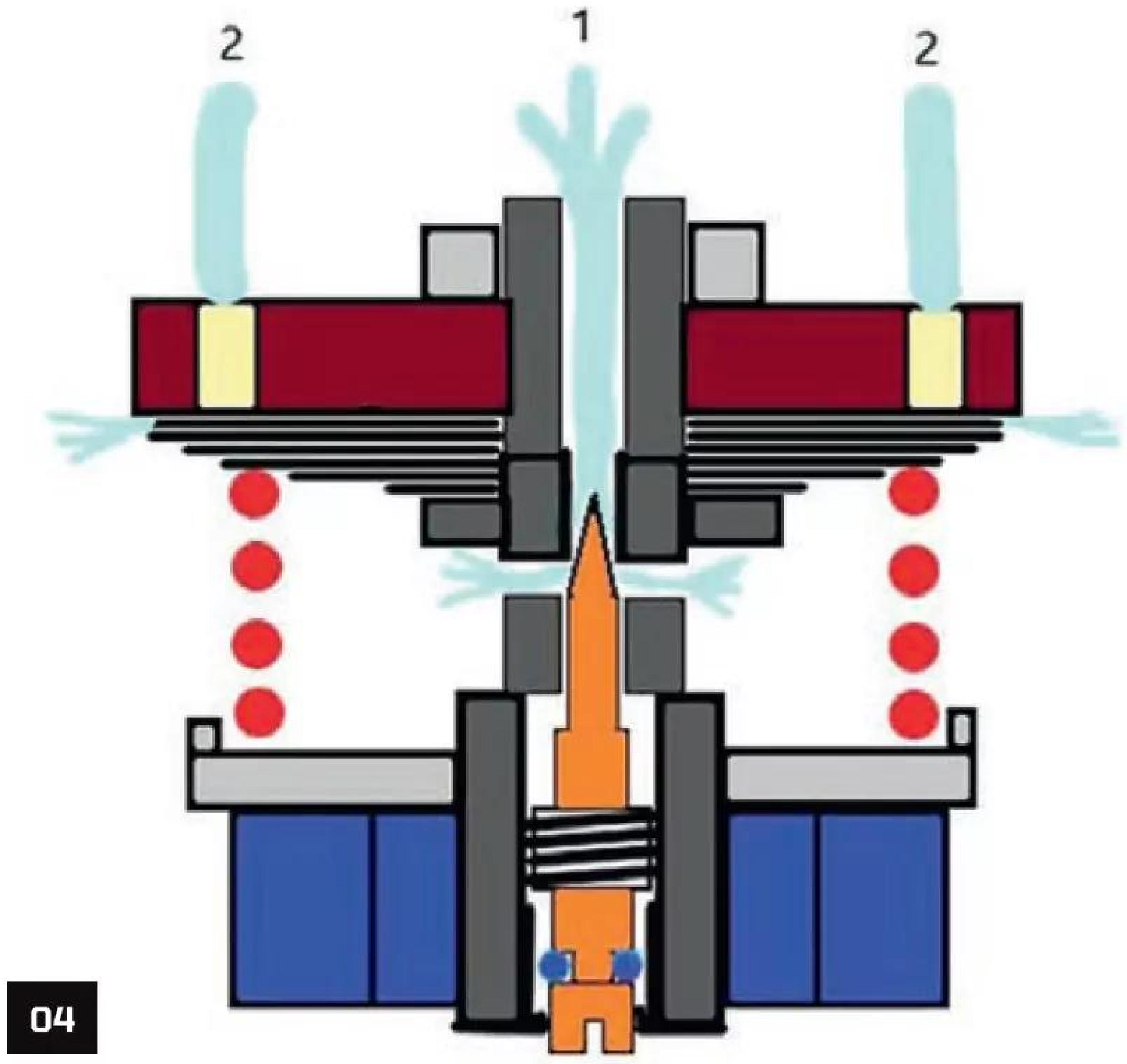

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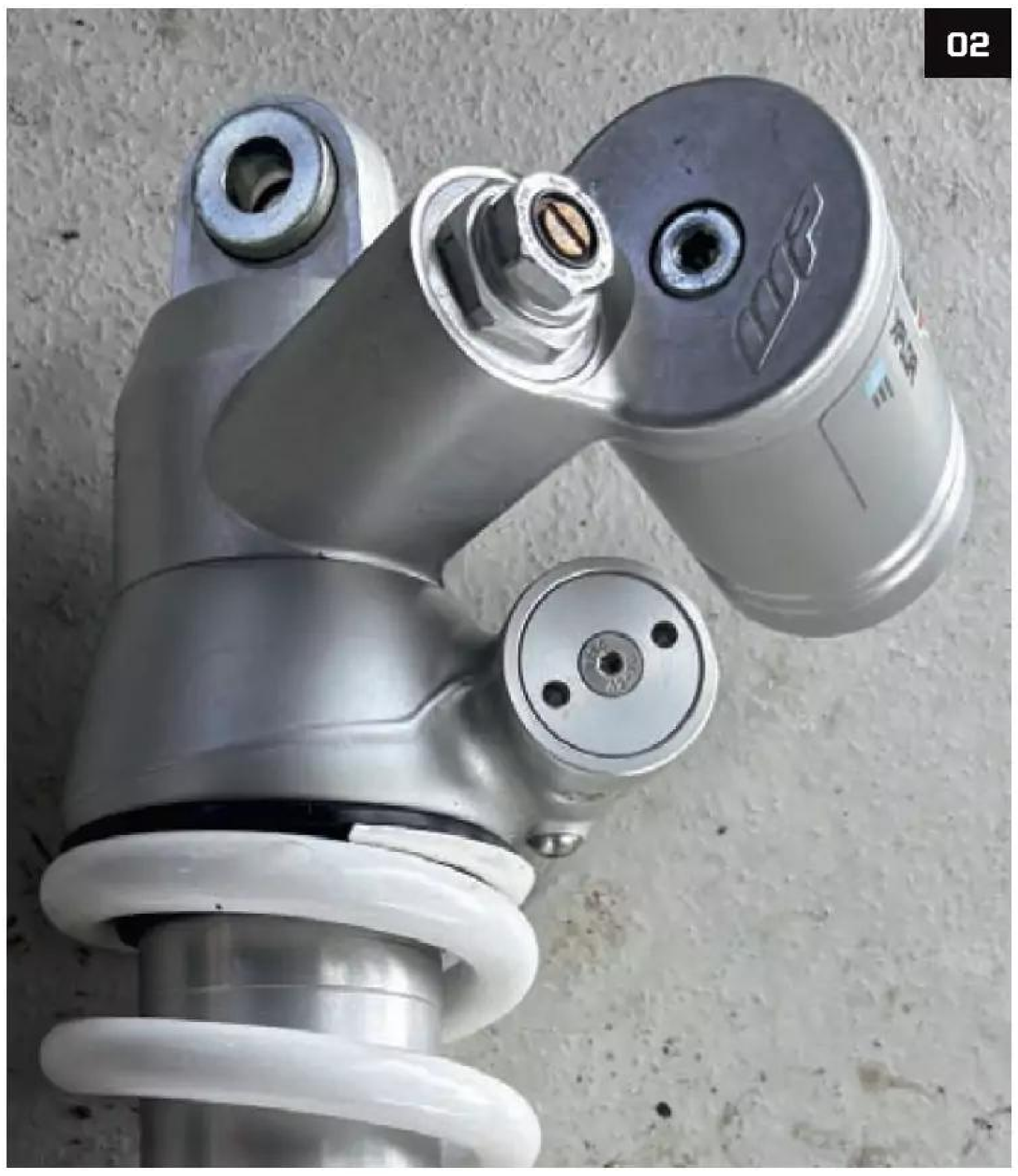

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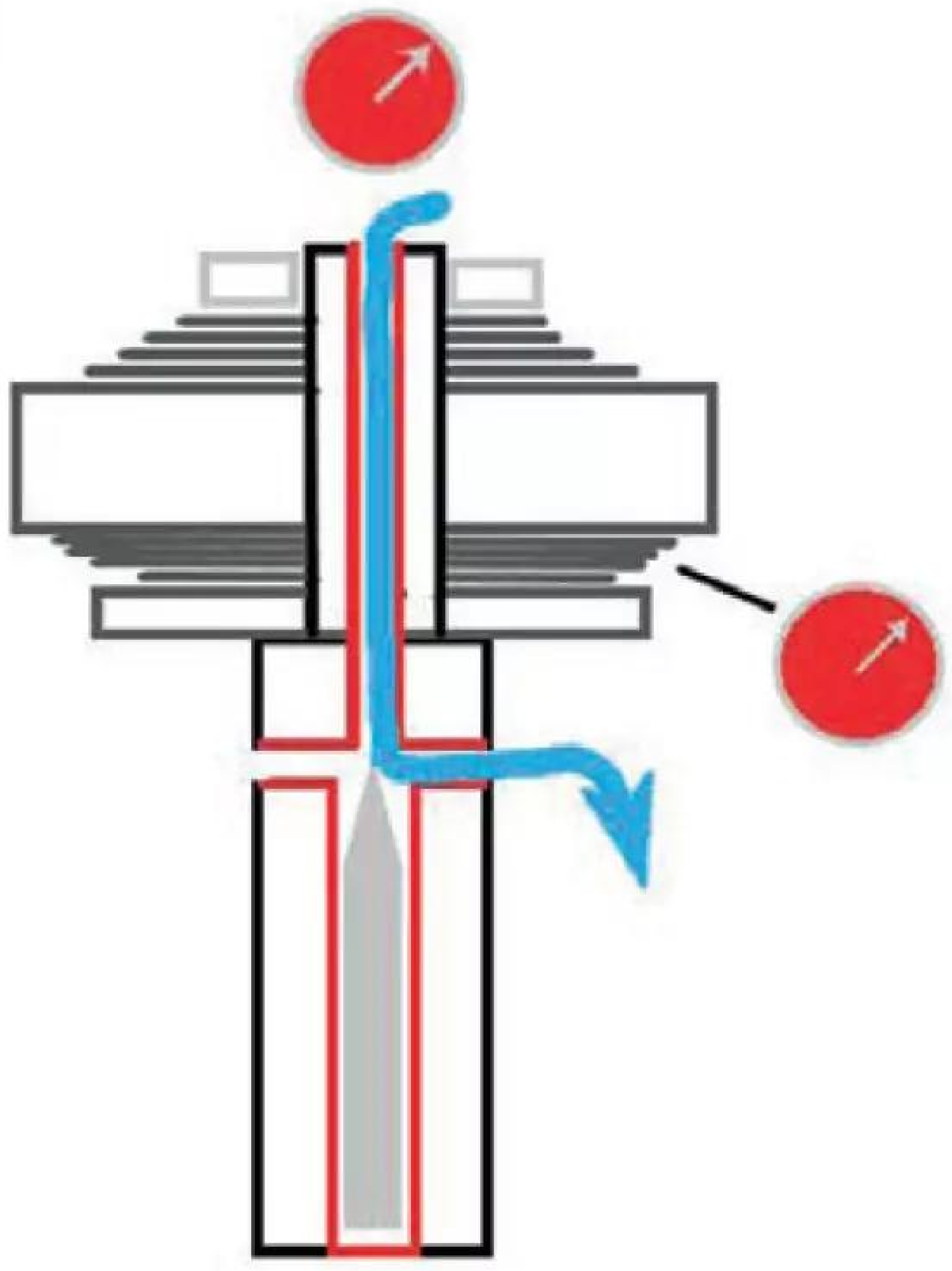
01: Fork rebound damping and spring preload adjusters are generally found atop the fork tubes. **02:** This KTM 890 Adventure R shock features compression damping and spring preload adjusters at the top of the shock. **03:** The rebound damping adjuster will be located on the bottom of most shocks. **04:** This illustration shows the impact that adjustment of the compression damping piston has on the oil flow. **05:** Illustration showing the rebound damping piston and the oil flow relative to adjustments of the piston.



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Small changes to the position of the clickers can deliver big results, especially in terms of performance over bumps or harsh terrain.

It's important to note that both compression and rebound damping settings are measured from 'fully closed' or 'fully hard'. This means tightening the clicker clockwise until it stops, then counting the clicks as you loosen the screw, and counting the number of clicks used.

COMPRESSION DAMPING

The compression clicker is used to help control the shaft speed of the suspension under load caused by terrain, acceleration or deceleration. Nowadays, most modern motorcycles come equipped with rear shocks capable of tuning both low- and high-speed compression settings, while the front end is a single adjustment.

By adjusting the low-speed compression, you will be changing how the shock will react with low shock speeds — for example, a set of rolling sand whoops. High-speed compression, on the other hand, controls the damping when the shock is moving at high velocity, like when hitting harsh, square-edge bumps.

Tuning your compression settings one or two clicks at a time is the best way to find your ideal setting. By setting too much compression in the suspension, the handling will feel harsh and the suspension will resist using the travel to soak up the ground's imperfections or obstacles. Having the compression too light will cause the motorcycle to feel unstable and blow through the travel easily.

The ideal setting should feel supportive enough to remain stable and handle the route with ease, but not too stiff that it makes for a jarring ride.

These settings typically work within a window of settings. That said, if you run out of adjustability, it may be worth talking to a shop about re-valving your suspension.

REBOUND DAMPING

The rebound setting on your bike's fork and shock controls the speed at which the suspension returns from fully compressed. Imagine bottoming during full acceleration: do you want your suspension to quickly pogo back up or slowly return to its normal sag? This is what the rebound damping controls.

Like the compression damping, tinkering with the rebound damping should happen at only a couple of clicks at a time. Having too much rebound in the suspension can cause multiple issues. Because the suspension will be slow to return with a lot of rebound, it can cause the bike to pack down in a series of bumps, making for a harsh ride. Too much rebound may also hold the front end down in a long corner, which can lead to a tuck.

On the flipside, too little rebound has negative effects of its own. With the suspension returning to normal sag too quickly, the bike will feel nervous at speed and have a difficult time tracking straight through bumps and kick you violently, even to the point of throwing you over the bars.

You need to find a setting that is the best of both worlds. The idea here is to get the bike to feel stable at all times, but also not pack so far into the stroke that it never returns to its normal rider sag. **AAB**

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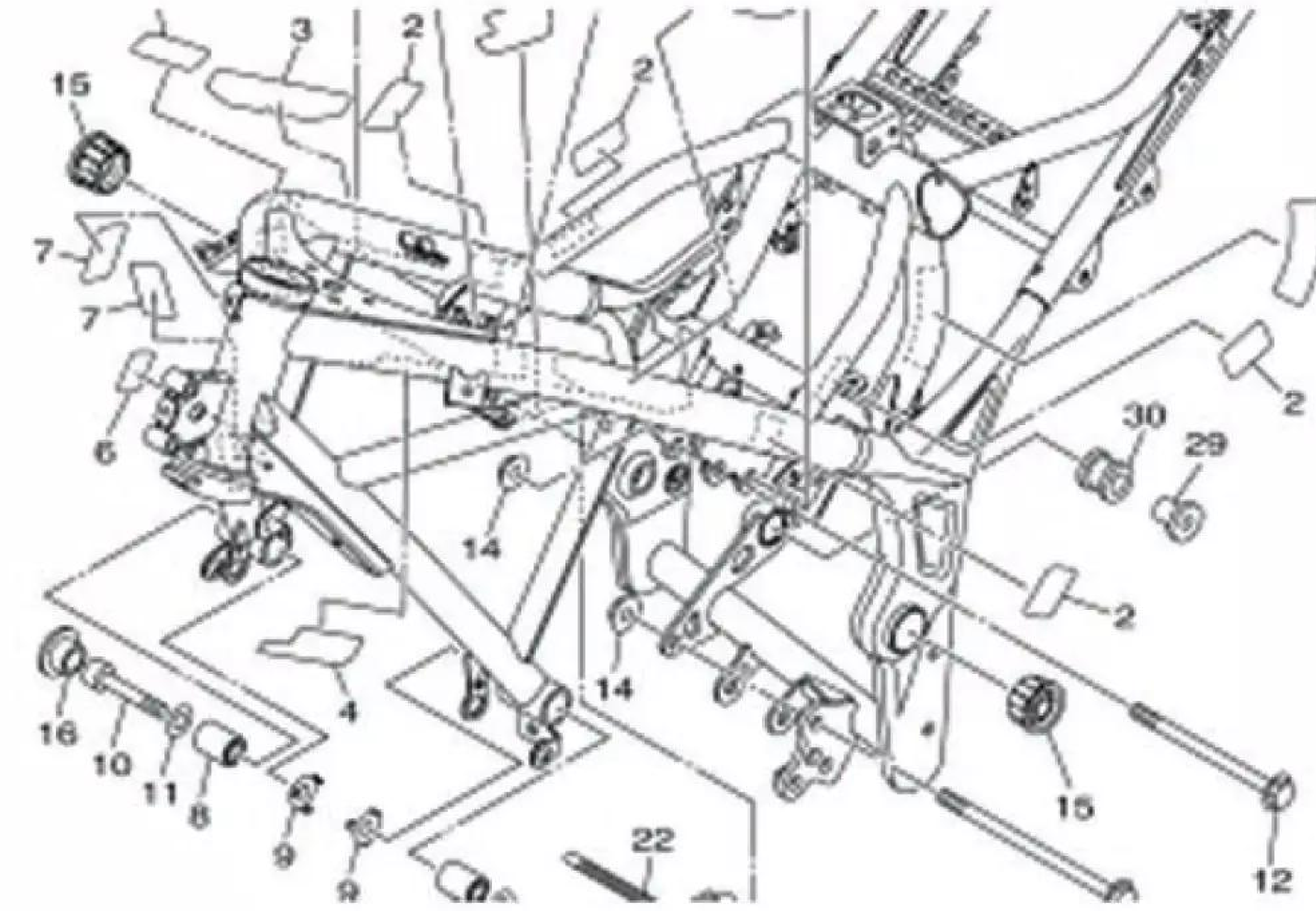
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HEAD & HANDS

When it comes to protecting your head and your hands, not all helmets and gloves are created equal, as Boothy explains.

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY **SHANE BOOTH**

Adventure riding can be quite a unique pastime because so much of what we do involves making calculated compromises. We want to be able to ride out of our garage on a bike and in gear that will work across the complete spectrum of terrain and riding conditions. From bitumen to sand, from freezing to sweltering, from clear skies and dust to mountain mist, fog and rain. We don't ask much from our equipment — hah!

HELMET HEAD

Finding a great adventure riding helmet is a perfect example of the compromises I'm talking about. It's not a motocross helmet and it's not a road helmet — it's an adventure riding helmet and it will help you deal with all of the conditions mentioned above.

But where do you start you start your hunt? Well, budget is the first factor to consider, and a great tip is to try to spend the most you can on a helmet. As the famous Bell Helmets advertisement said: "If you've got a $10 head — wear a $10 helmet".

Following budget, you also want to make sure you pick a helmet that fits you perfectly. Not every helmet will feel the same, so try multiple brands and models on to find one that works on your head. Different helmets will better fit different shaped heads, so try on plenty.

PEAKING DUCK

Budget aside, let's look at what makes a great adventure helmet from the perspective of my riding experiences.

An adventure helmet usually looks like a motocross helmet with a visor. It has a peak to help shade your eyes from the sun, something a road helmet doesn't have for good reason — a peak can be horrible at high speeds on the road, adding huge wind resistance to your helmet and placing real strain on your neck.

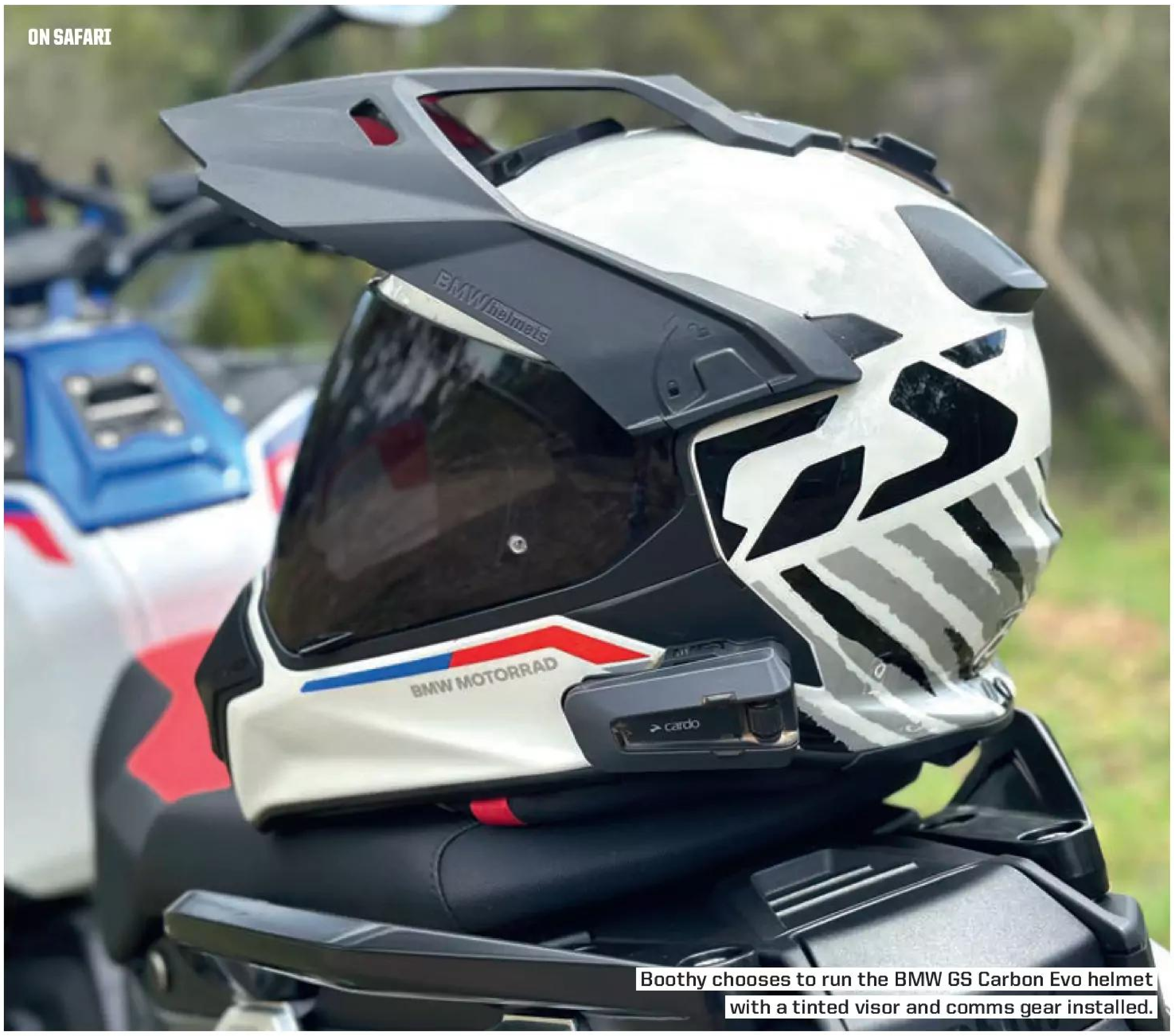
But an adventure helmet's peak differs from that on a motocross helmet in that it will be designed with large openings to allow plenty of airflow. This should reduce drag while still having enough peak there to offer shade on the eyes. It will not be as quiet and slippery through the air as a road helmet but it will offer priceless shade from the sun that will allow you to see much better for most of the day. There you go again, a compromise!

THE EYES HAVE IT

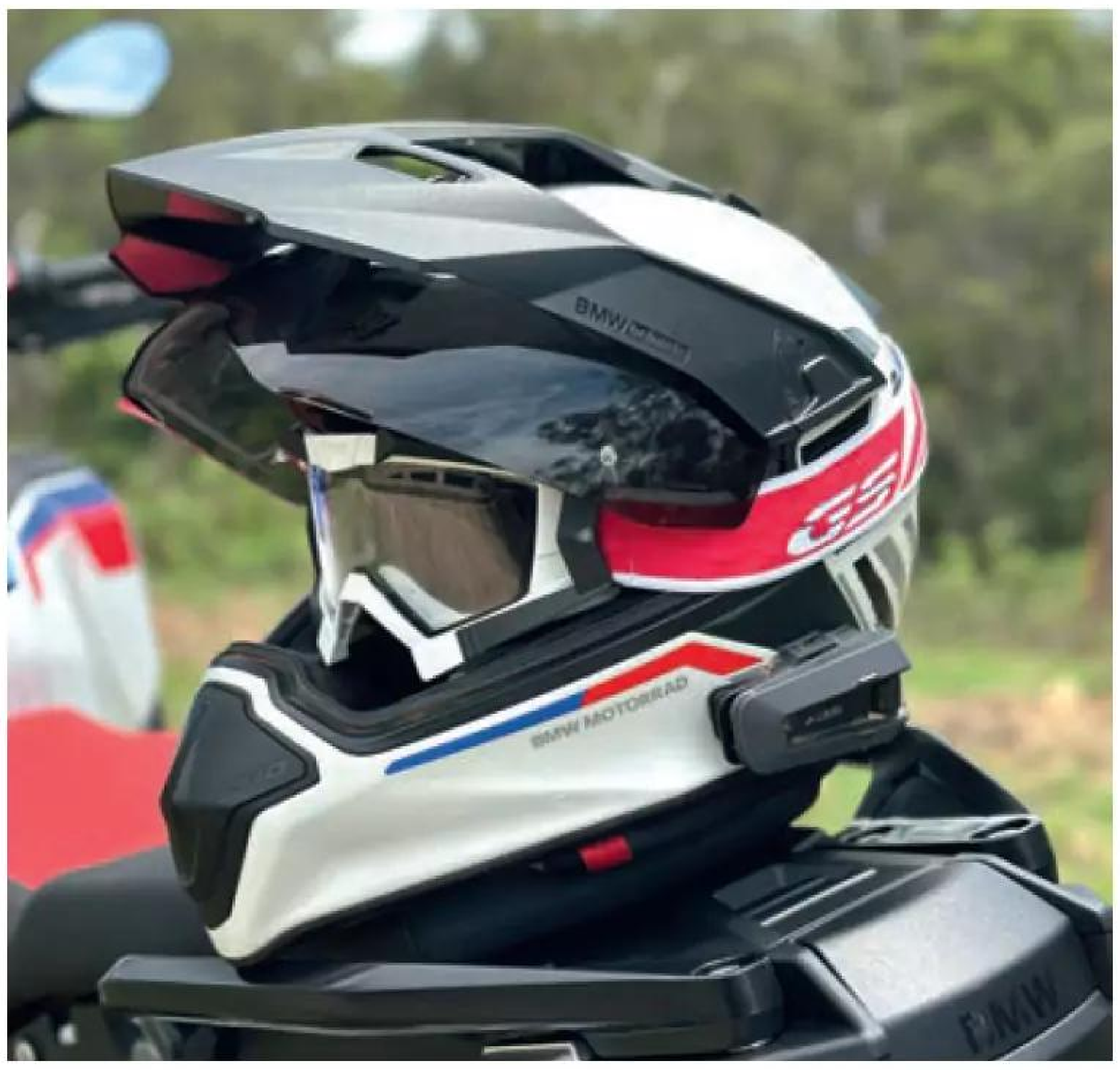
With an adventure helmet your eyes and face will be protected by a full visor that closes and seals, which is much better than trying to do 500km days wearing a motocross helmet and goggles.

Make sure the helmet you are purchasing has a Pinlock on the inside of the visor. This is to stop fogging in cold or wet conditions. It works by making your visor a dual layer,

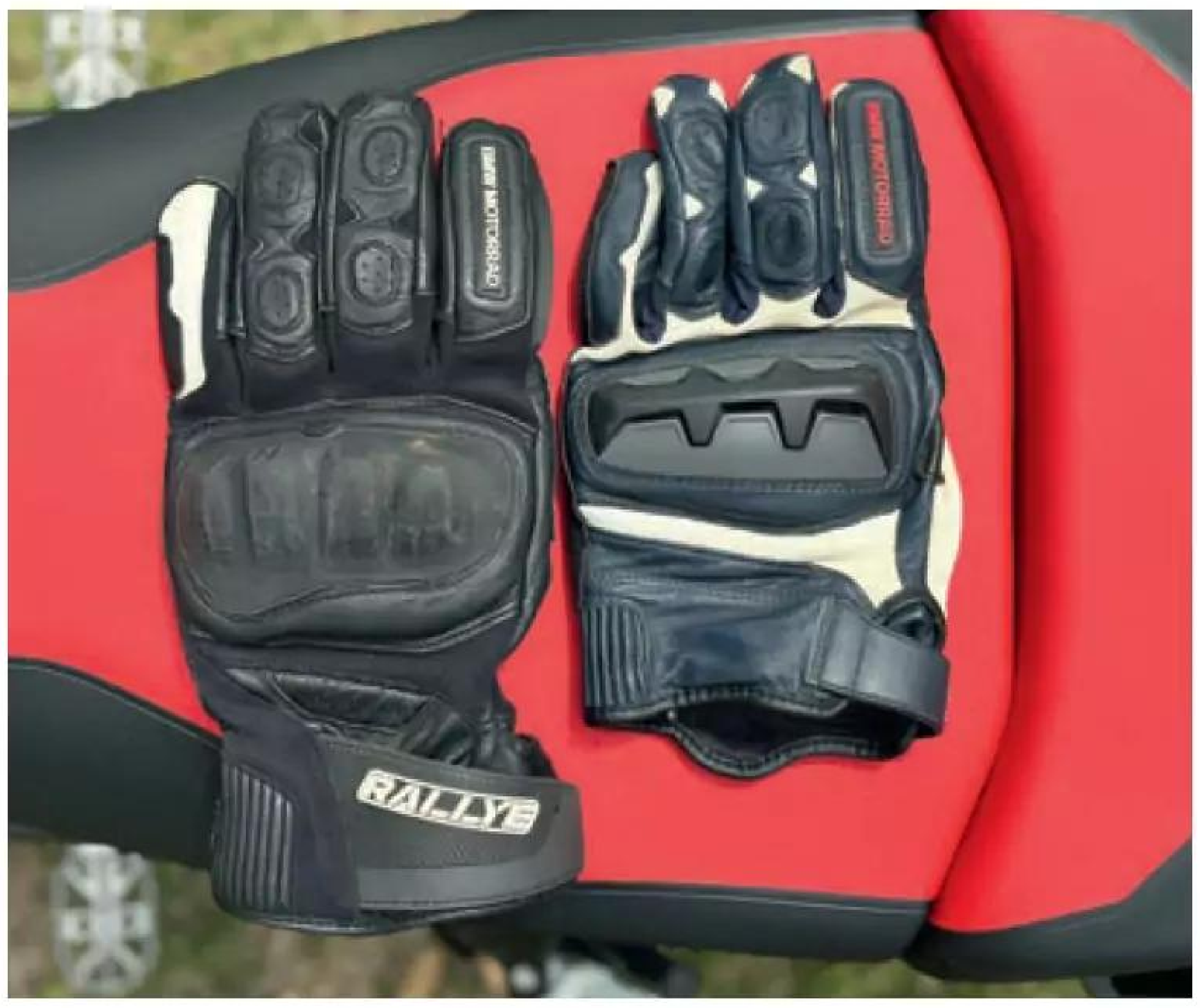
Riding an adventure bike is all about compromises, and this includes the helmet and gloves you choose to wear. Just do your homework and choose the helmet and gloves that will suit the specific requirements you have.



Boothy chooses to run the BMW GS Carbon Evo helmet with a tinted visor and comms gear installed.



ABOVE: Boothy also carries a set of goggles with a clear lens that can fit inside the visor to give him a vision option that will work when the dust gets bad or he has to ride at night. **BELOW:** BMW GS Rallye gloves (right) are Boothy's go-to glove, while he also carries a pair of BMW Rallye Gore-Tex gloves for when the weather gets cold and wet.



FINDING A GREAT ADVENTURE HELMET IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF THE COMPROMISES I AM TALKING ABOUT.

like ski goggles. For me this feature is non-negotiable: if there is no Pinlock, it's not even an option.

It's great to have a helmet that has visor tint options too, as 99 per cent of the time I ride with a tinted visor. I never ride at night — well, not planned anyway — so a tinted visor makes daytime riding much nicer and very rarely do I find it a problem.

Some helmets will have a secondary internal sun visor you can drop down, meaning you can run a clear main visor and can then drop down the 'fighter pilot' tinted visor when needed. Some riders love this; personally I prefer just the tinted main visor.

If the tinted visor becomes a problem due to weather or having to ride in the dark, then I put on a pair of clear goggles that I always carry with me.

GOGGLE BOX

Which brings us to goggles: you want an adventure helmet that you can wear goggles with so that if you are in dusty conditions, you can protect your eyes.

The BMW GS Carbon Evo helmet I wear allows me to wear a pair of goggles and still close my visor down over them. This is the perfect scenario for dusty days or outback riding. I have my tinted visor down with a pair of clear goggles underneath. If I ever find the tinted visor too dark, I flip the visor up and I have clear goggles still protecting my eyes. Of course, every rider will find a solution that they prefer, but that's my pick for adventure riding.

AND FINALLY

On top of all the aforementioned features, look for a helmet that has a removable liner so you can wash it easily, while some helmets also have provisions for communication, which is handy.

HANDS UP FOR GLOVES

Don't underestimate the importance of good gloves for adventure riding. Your hands are your control centre, so making sure your gloves fit perfectly and offer good feel of the controls will change your riding experience. Once again, compromise comes into play when choosing gloves as we need good feel and might want to wear lightweight motocross gloves to achieve this, but then you will want protection from an incident on a sealed road.

I personally believe adventure riding is best attacked with two pairs of gloves. I ride the majority of the time in a short-cuffed, leather-palmed glove, the BMW GS Rallye. It has a textile upper with some knuckle protection, offers great feel of the controls and has the abrasion protection of leather palms just in case anything goes bad on the road.

But they are not cold-weather gloves, so when conditions are cold and wet I carry a pair of BMW Rallye Gore-Tex gloves. Truth be told, I hate cold-weather gloves as they are bulky and hard to feel the controls in, so I am super-picky about them. These gloves have been by far the best option for me as they are about as lightweight as a cold-weather glove gets yet they still offer great warmth when needed. They have a slightly longer cuff so you can tuck your jacket into them. They're not waterproof, but they will keep your hands warm even when they do end up wet.

A tip for cold-weather gloves is to try on a size bigger than you would usually wear and see if that offers you less restrictive movement from the thicker glove material.

Finally, if you have swapped a road cruiser for an adventure bike and are still wearing full-leather long-cuffed road gloves, do yourself a favour and look at some lighter adventure gloves — it will make a big difference. **AAB**

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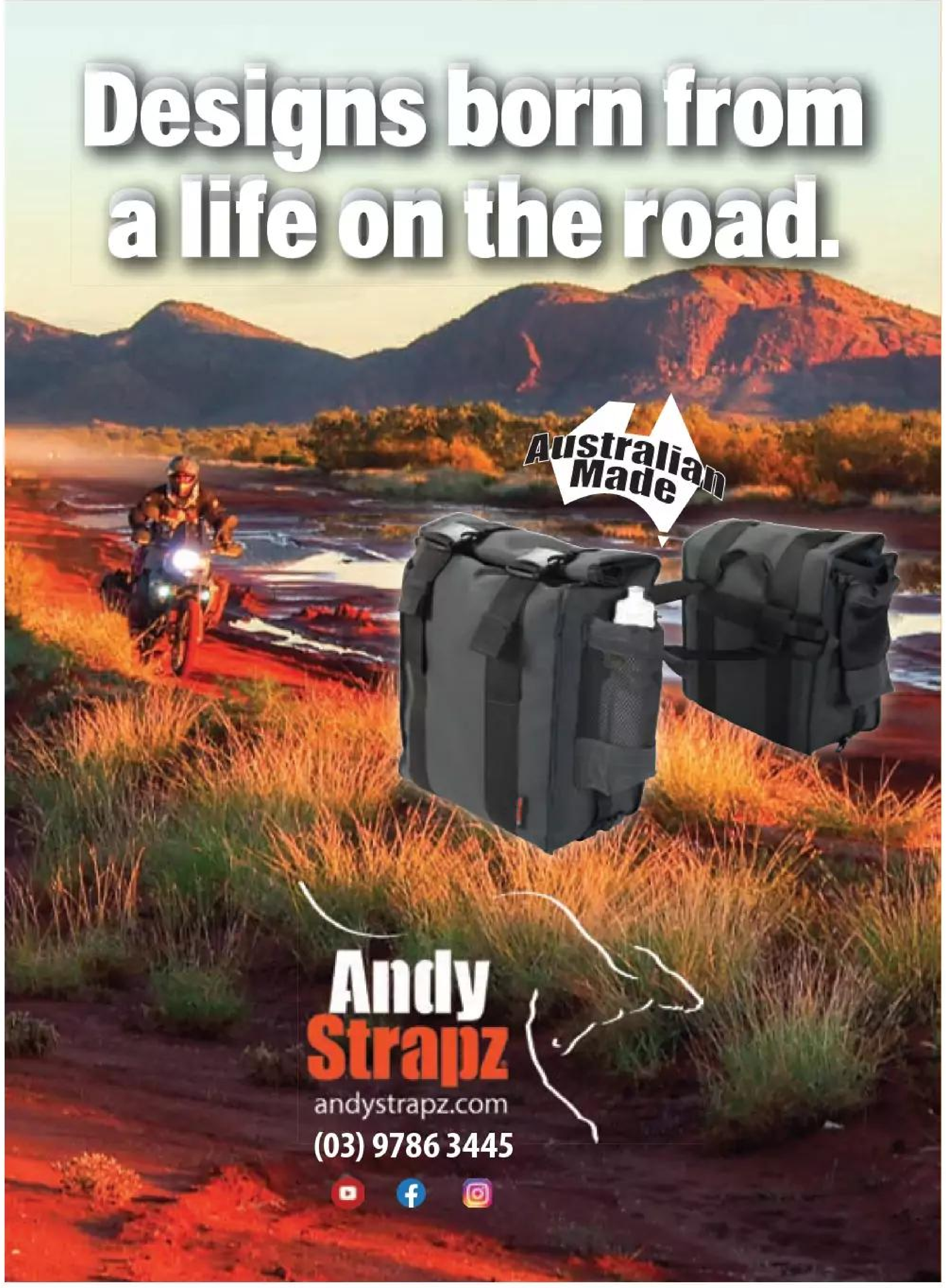
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@enduristanaustralia
Let's be honest: when you've got waterproof luggage, crossing water is just another challenge to conquer. Everything stays dry, the adventure continues.

@motogp
@valeyellow46 has done his bit to help those in need in Valencia. The nine-time world champion has donated a signed helmet for our online charity auction.

@ad_venturee
Here we go for three days to cover 300km of off-road track on the TET through France to Italy. Our first night bivouac close to a herd of sheep saw us wake up at 1:15 in the morning to the sound of two wolves howling a few hundred metres from the herd. #transeurotrail

@emig47
Run to the webigmoto.com website to get some serious savings on the entire range of riding gear. Check it out!

INSTA ADVENTURE

When you're not actually on the trails taking it all in for yourself, there's no better way to stay plugged in to the freedom and fun of riding than through other people's stories in real time. Instagram is the perfect platform for sharing ADV content and each issue we'll share some of our favourite posts from outstanding accounts that make us smile, make us laugh or make us wish we were there!

@honda_mc
Our latest Honda Genuine Merchandise has arrived and is available now. Visit your local Honda dealer today!

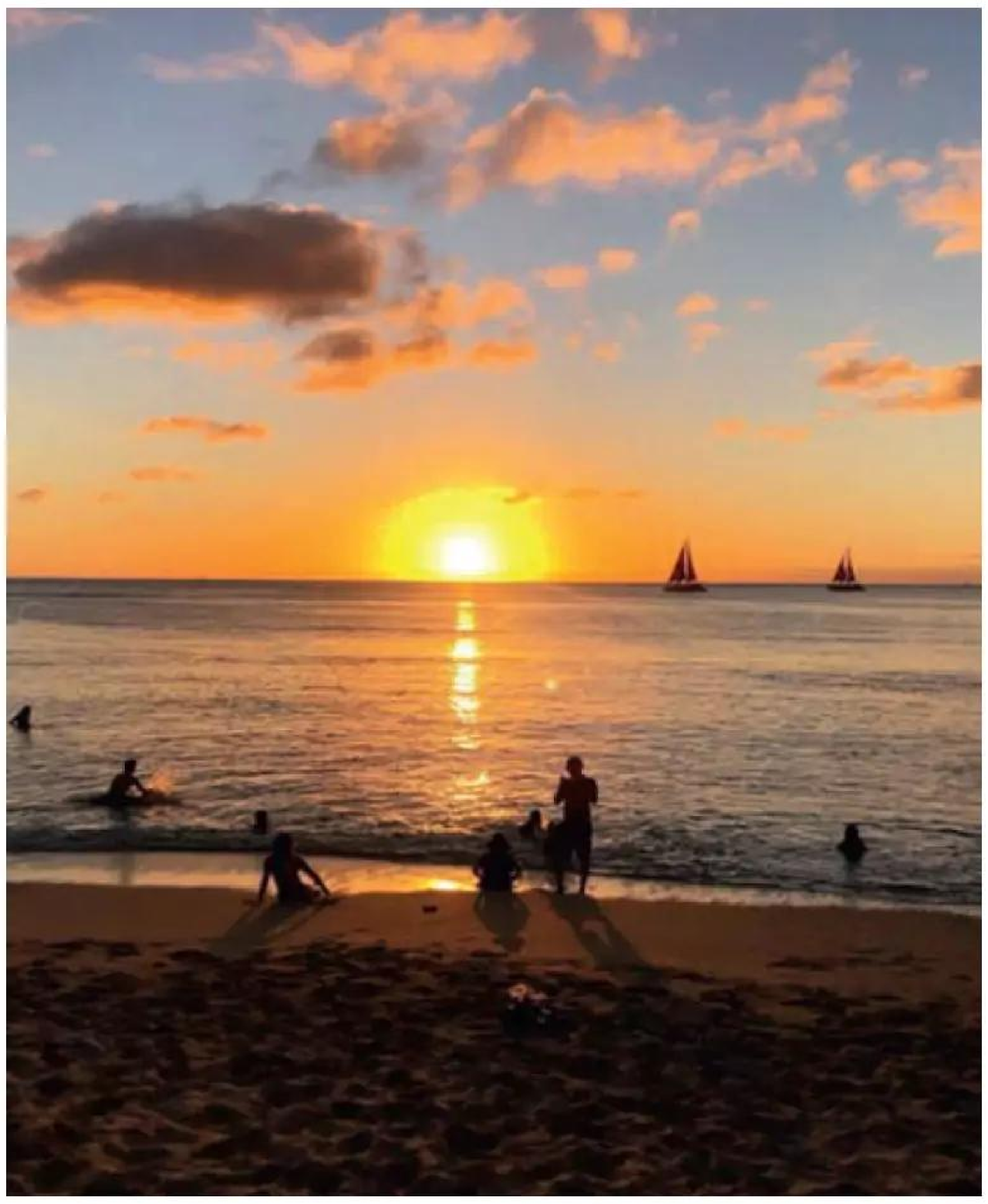
@moskomoto
Our Gnome tank bag will keep all your riding goodies safe and conveniently located. It has five litres of storage space and a 1.5 litre hydration reservoir to keep you hydrated within arm's reach.

VELCRO
speedcafe.
VELCRO | ORIGINAL THINKING
velcrobrand.au

@velcrobrand.au
We're excited to announce Safari Rally ace, Andrew Houlihan, as the latest brand ambassador for Velcro Companies. Andrew is gearing up to take on some of the toughest terrain in the world, in the @fimlive Baja World Cup and the @dakarrally. As part of his preparations, Andrew reinforced his @gasgas.official and @ktm_official motorcycles and safety gear with a range of VELCRO brand hook and loop products, which will provide a durable, reliable and versatile fastener solution which performs under even the toughest conditions!

@kawasakimotors_au
In 2023 the Kawasaki Elektrode revolutionised kids' first rides as a fun, electric-powered bike designed for ages three to eight. But why stop there? Level up with the Elektrode 20: with 20-inch wheels, it's designed for taller kids and teens.

@wattsy125
Doing a few days now of sun and sand with the young bloke in Hawaii.



TROOPER LU'S GARAGE
MAD TV
AUSTRALIAN ADVENTURE BIKE MAGAZINE

@oreadventure
It's been a busy week preparing for an epic 4,000km trip with the crew from AAB mag and MAD-TV to Cameron Corner in outback NSW, Queensland and South Australia, depending on which side of the post you're standing on!

@australianadventurebikemag
Feel free to tag us into anything you post and you may well end up leaping from the screen to the page!

REV UP THE ACTION ALL YEAR WITH THIS

SPECIAL OFFER

AUSTRALIAN
ADVENTURE BIKE
MAGAZINE
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ITALIAN DESIGN FLAIR ... FROM CHINA
LE OF TWO 450s: CFMOTO 450 MEETS ROYAL ENFIELD HIMALAYAN 450
KA TOUGH: BMW'S BARNSTORMING R 1300 GS ADVENTURE
E THE HIGH ROAD: ROMPING AROUND AT THE WALCHA MOTORCYCLE RALLY
REME NAMIBIA: BMW GS INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGE
TOVERSE: DIVING DEEP INSIDE INDIA'S ADVENTURE FESTIVAL
ARLES IN CHARGE: CATCHING UP WITH CHARLEY BOORMAN

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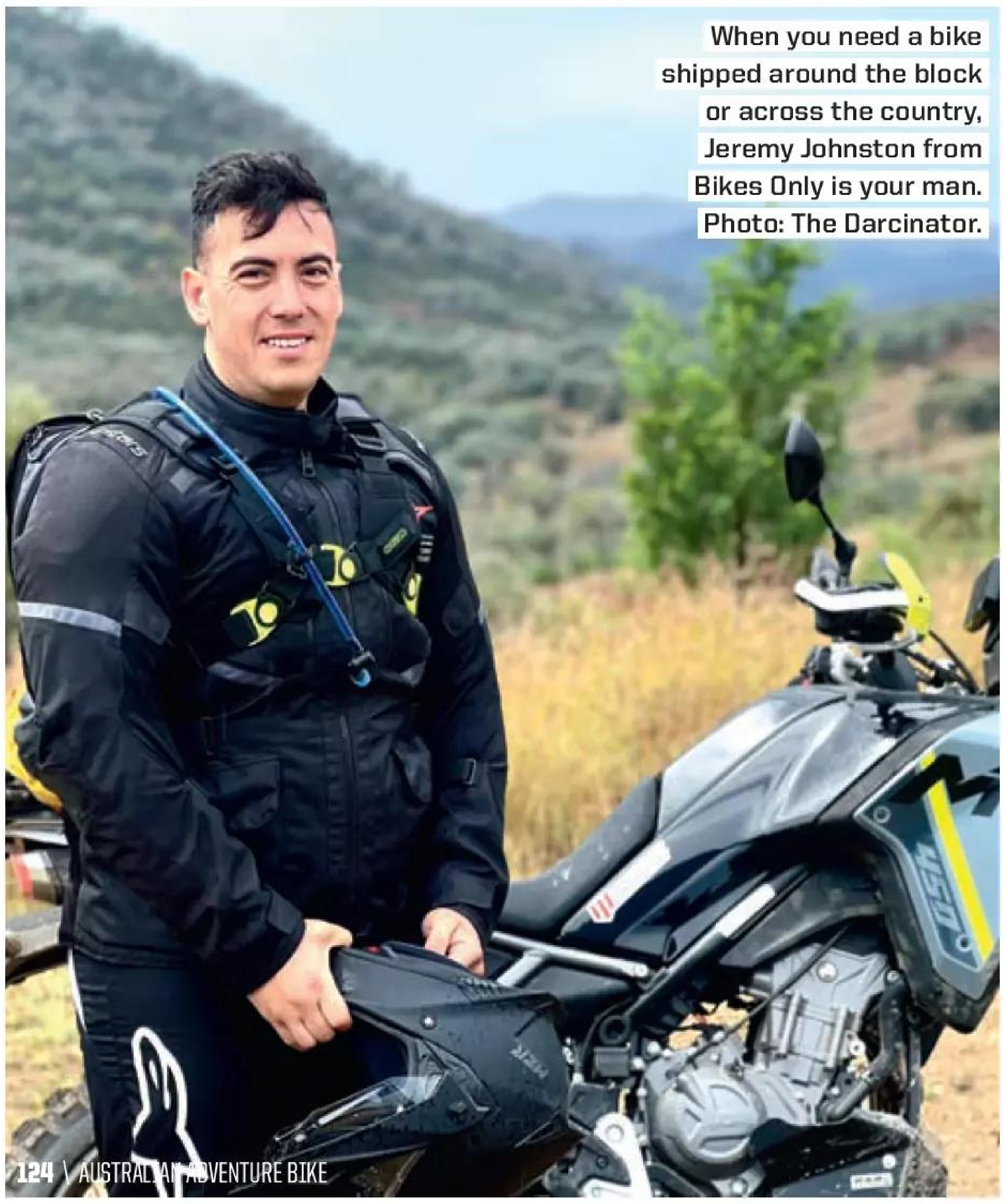
This is living, Barry! The DSMRA Sydney lads are all smiles at the top end of The Barry Way.

MEMORY CARD

The good, the bad and the ugly behind the scenes of what goes on at *Australian Adventure Bike* mag.

Now here's something shocking: Can Am is back, but they're going electric! Photo: Mal Jarrett.

Crikey, look at the size of those Indian prawns ... they're a handful!



When you need a bike shipped around the block or across the country, Jeremy Johnston from Bikes Only is your man. Photo: The Darcinator.

Now there's a BMW lounge chair if ever we saw one.

Nugget knows what mates are for:
standing by and watching the drama unfold!

After riding 400km straight in the pissing rain,
those burgers sure did taste good!

When nature calls!

Clubby might be smiling, but those mud-caked tyres
suggest he's trembling on the inside. Photo: Kiwi Ben

Nosh says: "Move aside, Dave,
I'm shooting this one!"

It's thirsty work when you're riding from Bridge to Bridge with the RideADV team. Photo: Leon Cutts.

Why is Nosh laughing? Because there's no way he's giving back the 450 MT!

Decimal Dave makes a B-line to the bar at the Jindabyne Brewery.

Pie eater! How good's the Nolan N70-2X when you want a fast pie and sauce on the run?

Charley and Ewan go looking for the *Long Way Down*.

CFMOTO
ADVENTURE BIKE
MAD
PIRELLI
MT450

Clarkey joins the long list of riders to give the CFMOTO 450 MT the thumbs up.

Another tough day at the office for the Moско Moto crew.

BMW MOTORRAD GS TROPHY

Miles Davis says 'Cheers!' to life as a marshal at the BMW International GS Challenge.

How about this pair of Power Rangers all decked out in their Alpinestars Tech Air Off Road systems?

Front wheel and forks? Who needs 'em! Certainly not the Flair Action Team riders.

GEAR & GADGETS

WHAT'S NEW AROUND THE SHOPS AND IN THE SHED? LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE LATEST GEAR & GADGETS.

U-COM 3 INTERCOM

Adventure riding is so good that you want to share it with your mates. And who better to share it with than your significant other? The U-Com 3 is the best intercom for couples, allowing you to stay in touch with each other while you ride. And you get immersive sound with deep and penetrating bass, and sharp and crystal-clear treble.

- New design with built-in battery, offering up to ten hours' battery duration when used in intercom mode.
- Operation menu offers multi-lingual voice guide.
- Fully compatible with Sena, Nolan and Shoei, and connect with intercoms from other brands in Anycom mode.
- Smartphone connection and you can manage your Smartphone through Android or Apple voice assistant.
- Can be updated using either a PC or Mac computer.

RRP: Single $199.95; Twin $389.95
www.motonational.com.au

SHAD TR40 SADDLEBAGS

SHAD's award-winning TR40 saddlebags are designed in Spain and offer a capacity of 32 litres and can carry up to ten kilograms in each one. The bags feature SHAD's patent-pending Double Locking System, which locks the bags to the 4P System fitting and at the same time prevents access to the inside of the bags.

- Made from highly abrasion-resistant material with reinforced base and stitching.
- Roll closure of outer and inner bags for waterproof performance.
- Latest keys and lock cylinder design reduce the chance of theft, and dust covers prevent dust from entering.
- Eight reinforced tie-down points per bag allow extra accessories to be attached.
- Six DuraFlex cam buckles allow each bag to be adjusted to the size of the load.
- All strap ends have closures to prevent flapping and loose ends.
- Padded carry handles included for easy off-bike transport.

RRP: $825
www.motonational.com.au

ENDURISTAN BLIZZARD 2 SADDLEBAGS

Leading global luggage brand Enduristan is always on the hunt for feedback and input to ensure the constant evolution of their product range. And here's a perfect example: Enduristan's latest Blizzard 2 saddlebags have been completely redesigned since the first generation and are now even more robust, lighter and versatile.

- Available in three sizes: 15, 25 and 35 litres.
- Waterproof, dustproof and mudproof to protect your gear in all conditions.
- Made from advanced and highly abrasion-resistant three-layer fabric for maximum performance.
- Patented break-away system makes for easy repair after a crash without tools.
- Rackless installation is easy, with the mounting system designed to suit various seat widths.

RRP: 15 litre $549; 25 litre $599; 35 litre $649
www.motorcycleadventure.com.au

INTACT BATTERY GUARD MONITOR

When it comes to your bike's battery, it's all too often a case of 'out of sight, out of mind'. But batteries are a vital component and you need to know if your battery is set to lose performance, or more importantly, already has! And this is where the Intact Battery Guard Monitor and matching app comes in.

- Suitable for use with all 12V lead-acid (wet, AGM, EFB or GEL) batteries and 12V lithium (LiFePO4) batteries.
- Displays battery voltage (including push notification in case of critical voltage condition) and case temperature.
- 72-day data storage (voltage, state of charge percentage and case temperature) on the device, and unlimited data history in the app.
- Perform cranking test and charge tests with the app.
- Monitor four vehicles simultaneously on the screen and more in the background.
- Reverse polarity protection protects the battery and device.
- You will always be informed about voltage drops and abnormal starting processes as soon as you're within range of the Battery Guard.

BATTERY GUARD
intAct
77%

RRP: $60
www.migmotorrad.com.au

MOSKO MOTO ECTOTHERM HEATED JACKET

When Mosko Moto added carbon-fibre elements to a kick-ass technical puffy, the heated Ectotherm jacket was born. The latest V2.0 model introduces heating functionality updates and is more versatile in use, both on and off the bike.

+ Features PrimaLoft Gold insulation with Cross-Core technology.
+ Six-panel carbon-fibre 3.5A/42W heating system that can be powered by the bike or other external power source.
+ Zippered hand pockets, with the left pocket converting to a stuff sack for easy packed-down storage.
+ Articulated fit, YKK zippers, DWR coating and power controller included.

RRP: $775
www.moskomoto.com

ROCKY CREEK POWER ADAPTERS

PD
PD
13.2
QC 3.0
PD 45W
13.2
QC 18W

Nearly every single adventure bike rider likes to stay connected, which means we've all got all kinds of goodies that need powering while we travel. Phones, cameras, GPS, notebooks, power packs and more can all benefit from recharging while you ride. And with most items using USB charging, these USB power adapters from Rocky Creek Designs make life on the road a breeze.

+ Range includes two models to choose from.
+ The PA032 has dual USB C (18W) fast charging outputs. It includes a voltmeter, weather cover and on/off switch.
+ The PA033 is a dual port USB adapter with USB-A (5V/4.5A) and USB-C (5V/3A) fittings and also has a voltmeter, weather cover and on-off switch. This adapter will fit a 12V merit power socket. It will supply enough power to charge a phone, tablet and GPS.

RRP: PA032 $50.35; PA 033 $41.95
www.rockycreekdesigns.com.au

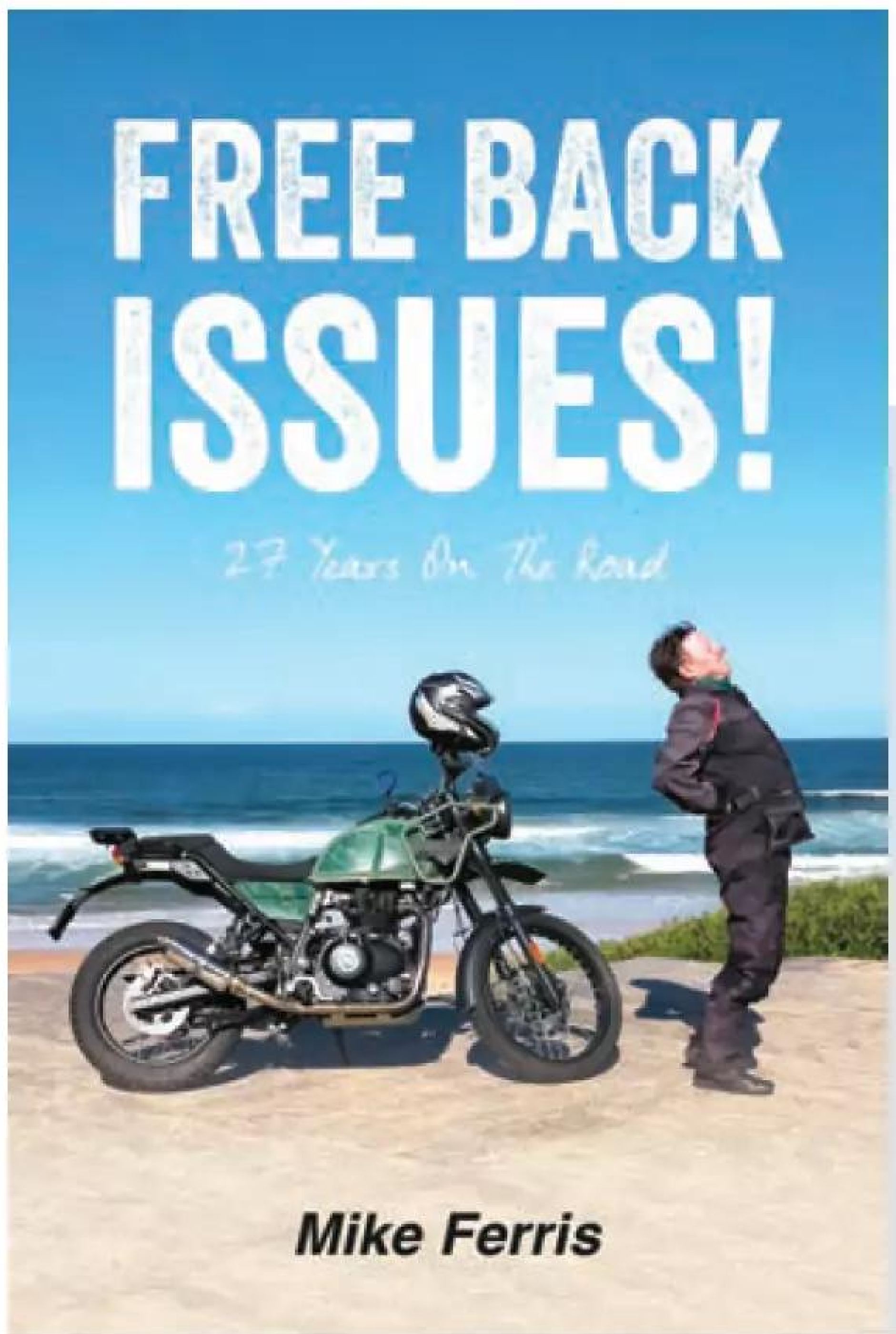
AIROH COMMANDER 2 HELMET

AIROH
AIROH

When you're ready to take the lead and choose your own path, the Airoh Commander full gloss helmet is the perfect partner. It's been a best seller with adventure riders and offers the versatility of being able to be used in three different versions.

+ Available in three shell sizes for a perfect fit, with Full Carbon 6K or Composite Carbon construction.
+ Sophisticated ventilation system.
+ Extra-wide vision visor and Airoh's Automatic Anti-fog system.
+ Coolmax technical textiles throughout, with removable and washable liners.
+ Pinlock 120 XLT included.
+ ECE 2206 approved.
+ Weight: from 1440 grams.

RRP: $949.95
www.motonational.com.au



FREE BACK ISSUES! BOOK

Life as a motorcycle tour guide would have to be right up there with the best of jobs. Ride bikes all day, raconteur with customers all night, then get up and do it all again, day after day. Mike Ferris is an Aussie bloke who has been hosting guided bike tours all around the world for 30 years and yep, he's got a few stories to tell … and he has, by writing a book! It's called *Free Back Issues!* and it's available through his World On Wheels tour company.

+ A collection of over 50 exciting stories and anecdotes from a life on the road in 30 countries.
+ Quality publication, printed on high-grade photo stock to highlight more than 70 beautiful hi-res images throughout.
+ Read about the time a group of 16 rode through a fully-fledged war between India and Pakistan in Kashmir.
+ Or the time a group was incarcerated in Bolivia during a civil uprising.

RRP: $30
www.worldonwheels.tours

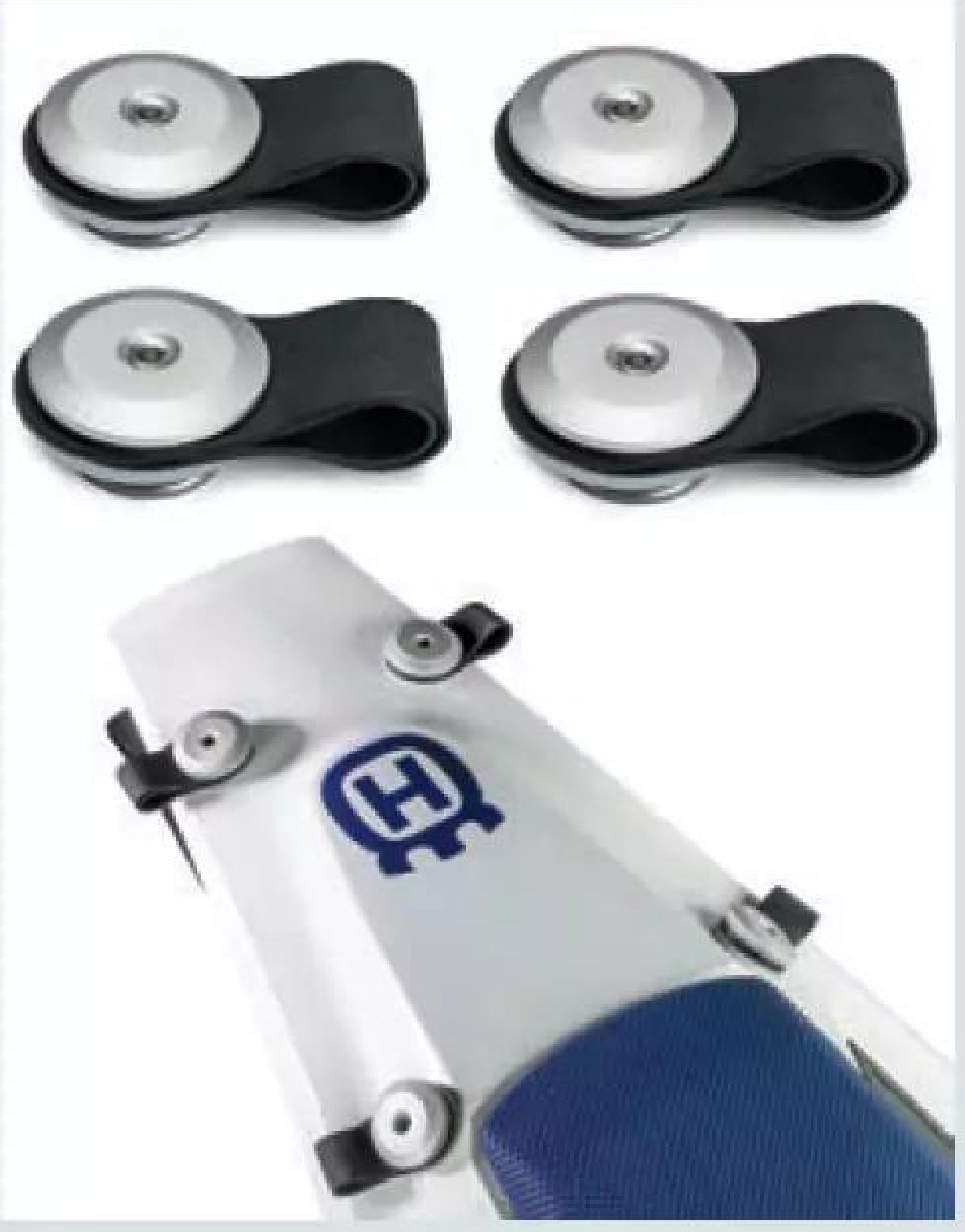
KLIM X1 ALPHA HELMET

The Klim X1 Alpha helmet is a top-tier adventure helmet built for long-distance riders who demand exceptional safety, comfort and ventilation. Designed with innovative materials and features, it enhances performance, reduces fatigue and ensures unparalleled optical clarity for a safer, more enjoyable ride.

+ Combines Koroyd impact-absorbing material with traditional EPS foam for optimal energy absorption and advanced impact protection.
+ Includes Brrr Triple Chill Effect antibacterial fabric, premium leather suede and optimised ventilation channels.
+ Constructed with hand-laid 3K pre-preg carbon-fibre, in three shell sizes (XS-M, L, XL-3XL).
+ Four modes: ADV, Dual-Sport, Off-Road and Street, with tool-free removal of the peak visor and face shield.
+ Fully compatible with all communication systems.
+ Includes Super HD face shield technology, a Pinlock 120XT anti-fog lens, UV400 protection and infra-red heat shielding for clear and safe vision.
+ Available in seven colour choices, in sizes XS to 3XL.

RRP: $1449.95
www.adventuremoto.com.au

KRIEGA RACK LOOPS



If you're having trouble finding an easy fixing point for luggage straps on your bike, check out these rack loops from Kriega. They are quick and easy to mount and come ready to use in a pack of four.

+ Fit any Kriega OS adventure pack to any off-road bike with these Kriega rack loops.
+ Also perfect for mounting roll-top bags, tents, swags, etc.
+ Provide a versatile anchor point for luggage straps where you need them.
+ Ultra secure yet ultra lightweight, weighing in at just 25 grams each.
+ Easy fit to a rear guard or bodywork: just drill four 6mm holes.
+ Also available in KTM fit for standard KTM 1090, 1190 and 1290 OEM rear racks.

RRP: $75 (pack of 4)
www.kriega.com.au

TOURATECH HANDLEBAR TRAVEL BAG

If there's one thing you can bank on when it comes to leading European motorcycle luggage and accessory brand Touratech, it's that they have a product for every application. Like this new handlebar travel bag, which gives you another stash point on your bike for all those personal items that you want easy access to as you travel.

+ Can be filled with items you need quickly and can be accessible right in front of your riding position.
+ The magnetic clip closes the bag securely and safely, while the high-tech zippers ensure the whole bag is water-tight.
+ Items like your phone, keys and wallet can be safely stored within the two-litre storage volume.
+ Its design is the culmination of years of universal luggage research and understanding thanks to Touratech's top designers.

RRP: $204
shop.touratech.com.au

KAWASAKI OGIO GEARBAG

The Ogio/Kawasaki branded Rig 9800 travel bag stands alone as the king of gearbags! This flagship bag is the industry standard and the world's best riders have been using Ogio bags for almost 20 years.

+ Structural Load Equalising Deck system for increased durability and handling in the toughest of conditions.
+ Wide mouth lid opening for easy access to all internal gear compartments.
+ Large main compartment includes adjustable dividers and padded helmet chamber.
+ Several multi-use compartments for apparel and smaller gear items.
+ Heavy-duty oversized wheels with extra clearance.
+ Telescoping pull handle.

RRP: $450
www.kawasaki.com.au

WARP 9 TOW ROPE

Ever been stuck out on the trail with a broken-down bike? And had no way for your mate to drag you back home? If only you had packed a Warp 9 tow rope! This product is cheap and easy insurance to help you get back to civilisation, so don't leave home without it!

- + Made from tough but lightweight 12-strand Spectra/UHMWPE cord with a 2200-pound break strength.
- + Double loop ends for easy use.
- + Each looped end is covered in a Kevlar sheath to protect the rope from abrasion.
- + Measures 6m long (approx. 20 feet).
- + Could double as a guy rope for a tarp, or to hang up your riding gear.

RRP: $36.95

www.adventurebikeustralia.com.au

LEATT ADV 9.5 CARBON HELMET KIT

Unveiling the pinnacle of adventure riding protection, the Leatt ADV 9.5 Carbon helmet sets the new standard for safety and performance. Designed to accommodate adventure riding, the 9.5 Carbon helmet includes a photochromic shield and a clear shield, and a pair of Leatt 4.5 Velocity goggles with Iriz lens, plus there's a Pinlock 120 XLT Maxvision shield as well!

- + Engineered with Leatt's 360° Turbine Technology to ensure superior rider safety by reducing low-impact energy associated with concussion and brain rotational acceleration.
- + Four densities of impact foam provide unparalleled protection while keeping a stylish, compact profile.
- + Weighs in at 1490g (M/L shell).
- + Magnetic Fidlock buckle for seamless fastening.
- + Meets ECE 22.06 and DOT safety standards.
- + Premium helmet bag included.

RRP: $1399.99

www.leattmoto.com.au

LEATT ADV RALLY 5.5 JACKET

Meet the Leatt ADV Rally 5.5 jacket, a CE A-rated adventure performance jacket that offers outstanding ventilation, durability and protection. Its innovative features include a unique zip-off lower arm solution, allowing riders to maintain elbow protection even when the arms are zipped off.

- + Built-in CE-certified impact protection, including lightweight, ventilated 3DF foam with a semi-compression fit for improved protection.
- + Constructed with Leatt-developed Ripstop four-way stretch material and non-PU DWR (Dirt and Water-Resistant) coating for weather resistance and improved breathability.
- + Incorporates deflection tech panels for CE level A-rated abrasion resistance.
- + Ventilation system includes main zip vents, underarm zip vents and a large open back vent, ensuring airflow and comfort.
- + When the going is especially hot, remove the lower, zip-off arms for ultimate ventilation.
- + Additional features include YKK zippers, hydration pocket integration and a Brace-On system for neck brace compatibility.

RRP: $649.99

www.leattmoto.com.au

KLIM BAJA S4 JACKET & PANT

The Klim Baja S4 jacket and pant offer exceptional performance in hot-weather riding conditions, ensuring maximum comfort, protection and versatility.

- + Schoeller-Dynatec high-tenacity nylon mesh and full-time chassis ventilation ensure airflow at all speeds.
- + Strategically placed four-way Karbonite micromesh stretch panels for unrestricted movement.
- + Ceramic-plated SuperFabric on shoulders, elbows and knees, 750D Cordura reinforcements in high-wear areas, and perforated goat leather inside the knees for grip and heat resistance.
- + D3O CE Level 1 armour for elbows, shoulders, back, knees and hips.
- + Designed to pair with Enduro S4 waterproof shells for wet and cool conditions.
- + Jacket has eight pockets, adjustable fit and kidney belt compatibility.
- + Pant has two cargo pockets, moisture-wicking liner and adjustable waist, cuffs and calves.

RRP: Jacket $1029.95; Pant $889.95

www.adventuremoto.com.au

AURORA CARBON-FIBRE PANELS FOR DUCATI DESERTX

International rally parts specialist Aurora has been working hard to deliver a full range of performance rally parts for the Ducati DesertX. They've got a whole stack of goodies on the go, with an impressive line-up of carbon-fibre body parts including these front body panels.

- Upgrade the looks and durability of the DesertX's OEM front panels.
- Designed by Aurora and constructed by leading carbon-fibre specialist CFCP.
- Fully rally-proofed by the Aurora team at the Hellas Rally.
- Take your DesertX to the next level and check out the full range of carbon-fibre parts available from Aurora.

RRP: $2100

www.aurora-rallyaus.com

BARKBUSTERS CARBON HANDGUARDS

The Carbon handguards from Barkbusters are the perfect blend of style and practicality. Featuring a sleek design for wind protection and crafted from genuine hand-laid carbon-fibre with a UV-stable gloss finish, the Carbon handguards elevate your bike's looks while providing protection and delivering style and strength for every adventure.

- Genuine hand-laid carbon-fibre construction with UV-stable gloss coating.
- The sleek design adds style and wind protection to your bike.
- Reinforced construction for maximum impact resistance.
- Universal fit makes them compatible with most adventure bikes.
- Fits Barkbusters alloy backbones (except EGO backbone).

RRP: $234.95 (guards only)

www.barkbusters.net

KTM CIRCUIT BACKPACK

The Circuit backpack shows the true colours of KTM fans. It's decked out in the official KTM orange and black graphics, and it's big enough to carry all your daily needs while being specifically built to go the distance.

- Large main compartment.
- Specific laptop compartment for 15-inch laptops.
- Padded iPad/tablet/e-reader sleeve.
- Padded shoulder straps.
- Side mesh pockets.
- Convenient Pullman handle grip with extruded aluminium handle.
- Manufactured for KTM by Ogio.

RRP: $173

www.ktm.com

KTM
RACING TEAM
RACING

CFMOTO 450 MT TALL SCREEN

If you want a little more protection from the elements when racking up the big miles on your 450 MT, CFMOTO has the answer. It's this accessory tall screen that's both taller and wider than the standard screen to help keep you get out of the wind blast.

- Constructed from high-quality, high-definition acrylic.
- 130mm taller and 54mm wider than the 450 MT's standard screen.
- Uses the original factory mounting points to allow for easy installation.
- Available online or direct from your local CFMOTO dealer.

RRP: $149.95

www.cfmoto.com.au

HUSQVARNA GOTLAND JACKET

Husqvarna riders are a loyal breed and love to display their true colours at every opportunity. The Husqvarna Gotland jacket does exactly that by being a genuine Husqvarna riding garment that not only looks great but is loaded with a stack of high-performance features.

+ Constructed with a waterproof multi-layer functional membrane.
+ Waterproof zippers.
+ Preformed shoulder and elbow design.
+ Adjustable waist.
+ Front and rear air inlets.
+ Detachable chest pocket.
+ Large cargo pocket on the rear.

RRP: $461.65
www.husqvarna-motorcycles.com

SW-MOTECH PRO ENDURO TANK BAG

Tank bags are quite literally the ADV rider's hand bag! They offer added luggage space for all those smaller items you need fast and easy access to on every ride: wallet, phone, camera, lipstick, eyeliner, ham and cheese sandwich, whatever! We never leave home without a tank bag, and this Pro Enduro model from SW-Motech looks to be a beauty.

+ Waterproof construction.
+ Welded body made of TPU material without seams.
+ 11 cubic litres of storage space.
+ Easy strap mounting system with a clip-on base.
+ Handy exterior stash pockets.

RRP: $349
www.sw-motech.com

GYTR TITANIUM FOOTPEGS FOR WORLD RAID

If you like standing up all day long on your Ténéré 700 World Raid like we do, do yourself a favour and check out these oh-so-trick titanium footpegs from GYTR. They're light, they're strong and they're designed to be super-comfortable to stand on when you are smashing out big kilometres.

+ Constructed from CNC machined titanium.
+ Heavily serrated design for maximum foot grip.
+ Open tread design helps to reduce the accumulation of mud in extreme conditions.

+ High-quality manufacture and durable construction.

RRP: $405.95
shop.yamaha-motor.com.au

SW-MOTECH DRYBAG 600

The Drybag range from SW-Motech should be every ADV rider's best friend. This Drybag 600 is large enough to hold all your gear for a multi-day trip away, it's easy to tether to the back of your bike, and all your gear stays dry and clean. Perfect!

+ Constructed from sturdy 500D PVC material.
+ Sizeable 60 litres of cubic capacity.
+ Roll-top closure.
+ Additional loop straps allow the bag to be pulled closer to the bike.
+ Handy carry handle for easy transport at your overnight stop.
+ Reflective details for increased safety.

RRP: $179
www.sw-motech.com

NITRO DVS ADVENTURE HELMET

The Nitro DVS adventure helmet is ECE 22.06 standard compliant, and as you will soon discover as you check out the price tag, it offers a whole lot of helmet for the price.

+ MPT (multi poly tech) shell construction.
+ EPS inner shell.
+ Quick-release retention strap.
+ Anti-scratch visor.
+ Customisable cheek pads, crown and liner.
+ Dual-vented shell with ultra comfort fit lining that is removable and washable.
+ Rear exhaust ports.
+ Sizes XS to XXL.

RRP: $199.95

www.linkint.com.au

23km
Driving East
80
80 km/h Speed
D80
7:27 Arrival
GARMIN

GARMIN ZUMO XT2 GPS

When you need throttle therapy, Garmin's Zumo XT2 motorcycle navigator is your prescription to hit the road, no matter where it goes. The bright six-inch display is glove-friendly and the unit is packed with features to help you find the perfect route!

+ Six-inch HD display is 15 per cent larger than previous models.
+ Can be used in both landscape and portrait modes.
+ IPX7 rated to withstand rain, vibration, dust and rough terrain.
+ Plan custom routes directly on the device or via the Tread app on your compatible smartphone.
+ Easily toggle between on-road maps, topo maps and BirdsEye Direct Satellite Imagery to get the perfect map for your adventure.
+ Record data such as speed, distance, acceleration, deceleration and elevation using the Tread app.
+ Easily send GPX files from your phone or third-party sources to the Zumo XT2.

RRP: Now $829 (save $170!)

www.whitesmoto.com.au

MOTUL
MOTO WASH
E2

MOTUL E2 MOTO WASH

Available in a convenient one-litre spray trigger bottle, Motul's E2 Moto Wash is a powerful biodegradable cleaner and degreaser for use on your entire motorcycle. It's suitable for plastic, synthetic fabric, paintwork, varnish and metal surfaces and components.

+ Efficiently removes all traces of grease, dust, soil, bugs and brake pad residue.
+ Spray generously over the whole motorcycle using the 'wide jet' position on the trigger.
+ Allow it to work for a few minutes, then rinse off with water, jet or steam pressure.
+ For very dirty parts, repeat the process using the 'directed jet' position on the trigger, then rub with a sponge or rag.
+ Use a soft cloth to dry and obtain a perfect finish.

RRP: $19.90

www.linkint.com.au

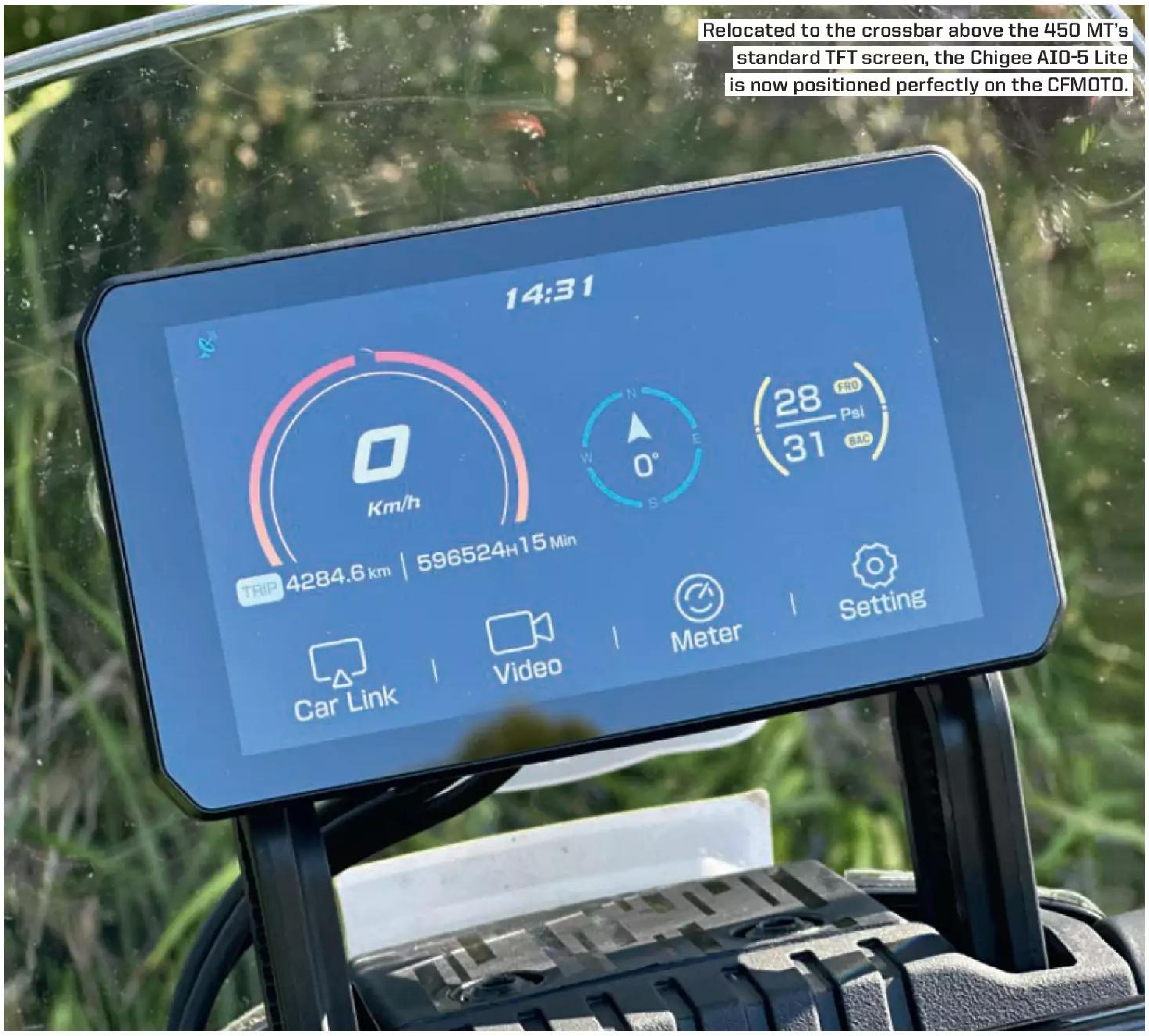
ALPINESTARS TECH 7 DRYSTAR ENDURO BOOTS

We've been wearing these Alpinestars boots for two years and they make the perfect transition from enduro to adventure use for riders who push hard off-road and want serious protection.

+ TPU lateral ankle protection and TPU shin plate construction.
+ TPU lower shell is reinforced with metal shank and includes toe reinforcement for impact and abrasion resistance.
+ Specifically designed Enduro sole offers durability, grip, feel and structural rigidity.
+ Drystar membrane on the inside combats all weather conditions and trail obstacles.
+ Ergonomic four-buckle system mated with upper Velcro closures.
+ Wide range of colour combinations and full range of sizes available.

RRP: $579

www.alpinestars.com



Relocated to the crossbar above the 450 MT's standard TFT screen, the Chigee AIO-5 Lite is now positioned perfectly on the CFMOTO.

Phone
Music
Maps
Messages
Now Playing
Exit
Podcasts
Audiobooks

Mirroring your smartphone and getting access to CarPlay via your iPhone is a winning feature of the Chigee.

GEAR CHECK:

CHIGEE AIO-5 LITE SMART RIDING SYSTEM

Back in AAB issue #29, Clubby introduced us to Chigee's AIO-5 Lite smart riding system, which he'd fitted to AAB's CFMOTO 450MT long-termer. I was lucky enough to be invited to ride the 450MT when the AAB/MAD-TV crew headed way out west into the NSW/Queensland outback on a week-long tour of duty late last year, which gave me plenty of time to get to know the Chigee unit. And afterwards I managed to snaffle the Chigee to keep it long-term and fit it to my own Ténéré 700.

Originally, Clubby had mounted the Chigee to the 450MT using the included handlebar mount kit, which positioned it below the CFMOTO's TFT display. I chose to get Chigee's crossbar mount, which is designed to fit to 12 to 16mm diameter horizontal crossbars. The 450MT has a crossbar above the standard display, so I relocated the Chigee up there where it's easier to view while still being tucked behind the bike's screen. I ran the cables for the Chigee's power and cameras down the left-side of the inner fascia of the fairing using stick-on cable keepers from Jaycar for a neat appearance. I didn't touch the other ends of the power cables, which Clubby had neatly attached to the battery and the accessory power outlet near the battery, which means the Chigee is only active when the bike's key is on, so there's no worry about draining power when you're parked.

I had to download the Chigee app to my iPhone and then pair my phone to the AIO-5 Lite unit via Bluetooth. It's all pretty seamless, following the prompts from the app as you go through the set-up.

The Chigee offers a feast of ride data and information, or you can watch the camera views and utilise blind spot detection from the two supplied 1080p HD cameras when installed. The optional tyre pressure monitoring kit is definitely worth the investment, in my opinion.

But what I really liked about the Chigee is the ability to use it to mirror your smartphone, meaning your phone can be kept safely tucked away in your tank bag or in a pocket on your jacket, because I'm paranoid about losing or damaging my phone. To keep my iPhone powered while riding, I stashed it in my Giant Loop tank bag and ran a power cable to the USB port on the 450 MT's dash.

Using my Sena headset system and the iPhone's built-in Siri voice commands, with the Chigee running Apple CarPlay from my phone, I had easy voice access to my phone's functions while riding. Calls, music and navigation were the big winners for me on the outback ride, especially when arriving in towns for the first time and trying to find a servo, or pub, or our accommodation — just use Siri voice commands and navigate via the iPhone's Maps displayed on the Chigee screen.

Other features I like include the touch-screen compatibility of the Chigee's five-inch LCD screen, and the overall robust and quality feel of the unit itself, which meets IP67 waterproof and dustproof ratings.

As 'tech gadgets' go, I'm a fan of the AIO-5 Lite and am stoked I'll be able to keep using it on my own bike from now on.

For more details on the Chigee, head to my 'OffRoadExplorer' channel on YouTube and check out my full review. — Lance Turnley.

RRP: $999.99

www.chigee.com

OnGuard's Rottweiler 8025 is an armoured key cable that we find handy for securing your bike on shopping runs.

GEAR CHECK: ONGUARD SECURITY & LOCKS

You bet we were stoked when a package of OnGuard locks and security gear arrived at AAB HQ, because we like to take the security of all our bikes rather seriously. As we all know, motorcycle theft is a real issue, so the tougher you make it for the thieves to get your two-wheeled pride and joy, the better!

OnGuard is one of the world's leading manufacturers of locks and security devices for cycling and powersports users, and their range of products is extensive. Just have a look at their website — they offer everything from armoured locks to cable locks to U-locks to disc locks to ground anchors and more.

The big daddy product in the OnGuard range we're trying out is the Mastiff 8019LP loop chain with X4 padlock. It includes a 130cm long titanium reinforced hexagonal link chain and hardened steel shackle that are designed to resist cutting, prying and jacking. It comes fitted with an embroidered chain cover and a Boxer U-lock that can also be used as a disc lock.

Next there's the Rottweiler 8025 armoured key cable, which we're using any time we duck out to the shops on a bike and want to secure it to a pole or fence while we're shopping or at an appointment. It offers the lighter weight of a high-strength steel cable with the added protection of a hardened steel sheath that resists attacks from bolt and wire cutters. The cable is 180cm long and we just sling it over our torso while riding and then feed it through the bike's frame when locking it up.

As another line of defence, OnGuard's 8266 Alarm U-lock features a 124mm x 208mm shackle and includes a motion-activated alarm that emits a 120db alert when set off.

For extra protection when parked, OnGuard's 8054Y Boxer disc lock is an oldie but a goodie. It features a key-operated 8mm hardened steel pin and comes complete

01

02

03

01: The Mastiff 8019LP chain lock offers some serious security. **02:** With an ear-splitting 120dB alarm, the 8266 Alarm U-lock should send thieves packing if activated. **03:** The 8063 Terrier roller cable lock is so handy for securing your helmet and gear to your bike when parked.

ABOVE: OnGuard's 8054Y disc lock is an oldie but a goodie.

with reminder cable and carry pouch. It's actually small enough to carry in a tank bag or even a jacket pocket.

Finally, the 8063 Terrier roller cable lock is another handy security item that we use to tether our helmet or luggage to the bike when parked. This little ripper is the size of a deck of cards and includes a 90cm steel cable secured by a combination lock. Just feed the cable through your gear and through the bike and lock it up. It's small enough to easily carry when not in use and will provide a deterrent against opportunist thieves.

The On-Guard keyed locks are supplied with multiple keys, plus you can register online for replacement keys in case your keys are lost.

OnGuard locks are distributed in Australia by Monza Imports and you can check out the range at bike shops everywhere. — Clubby.

RRP: Mastiff 8019LP $95; Rottweiler 8025 $80; 8266 alarm U-lock $120; 8054Y Boxer disc lock $55; 8063 Terrier roller $30.

www.onguardlock.com

Leatt's Flowtour jacket and pants are constructed with large sections of ventilated material to maintain maximum airflow when you're moving on hot summer days.

GEAR CHECK: LEATT FLOWTOUR JACKET & PANTS

If there's one thing you can bank on about an Aussie summer, it's that the weather gets hot and sweaty, and it can stay like that for months. Which can make your choice of ADV riding gear a tricky one — you still want protection, but you also want airflow to try to get some respite from the heat and humidity.

I've been wearing this Leatt Flowtour jacket and pants set for 12 months now and it's become my go-to gear for hot-weather rides. Why? Because it's vented, seriously vented, and as soon as you start moving you start to feel airflow, and for me that's critical to beating the heat. The Flowtour gear is constructed with Leatt's Ripstop material in the main shell parts, which is combined with large X-Flow ventilated mesh panels throughout, and it's these panels that let the air in and out. And the stuff works, as airflow is excellent.

Integrated into the gear are Leatt's 3DF protectors, which are included in the back, shoulders, elbows and chest of the jacket, and the hips and knees of the pants. Between the X-Flow material and the 3DF pieces, you get the ideal combo of ventilation and protection.

The gear feels light to wear, which is another boon in hot weather, while there are stacks of detail touches that tell you loud and clear the Flowtour range has been designed to perform. Features like the soft neoprene collar, waterproof front pockets, large rear storage pocket, inner phone pocket, rear hydration pocket and zip and Velcro sleeve closures on the jacket are all quality inclusions.

The pants also boast large waterproof pockets, heat-resistant panels on the knee inners, a ratchet waist closure and 3DF protection pieces in the hips and knees. The pants include removable suspenders/braces too — and isn't that a handy set-up to keep your pants in place? I've never run braces before but have fully embraced them now. Plus, the lower legs of the pants are sized large enough to fit over adventure boots.

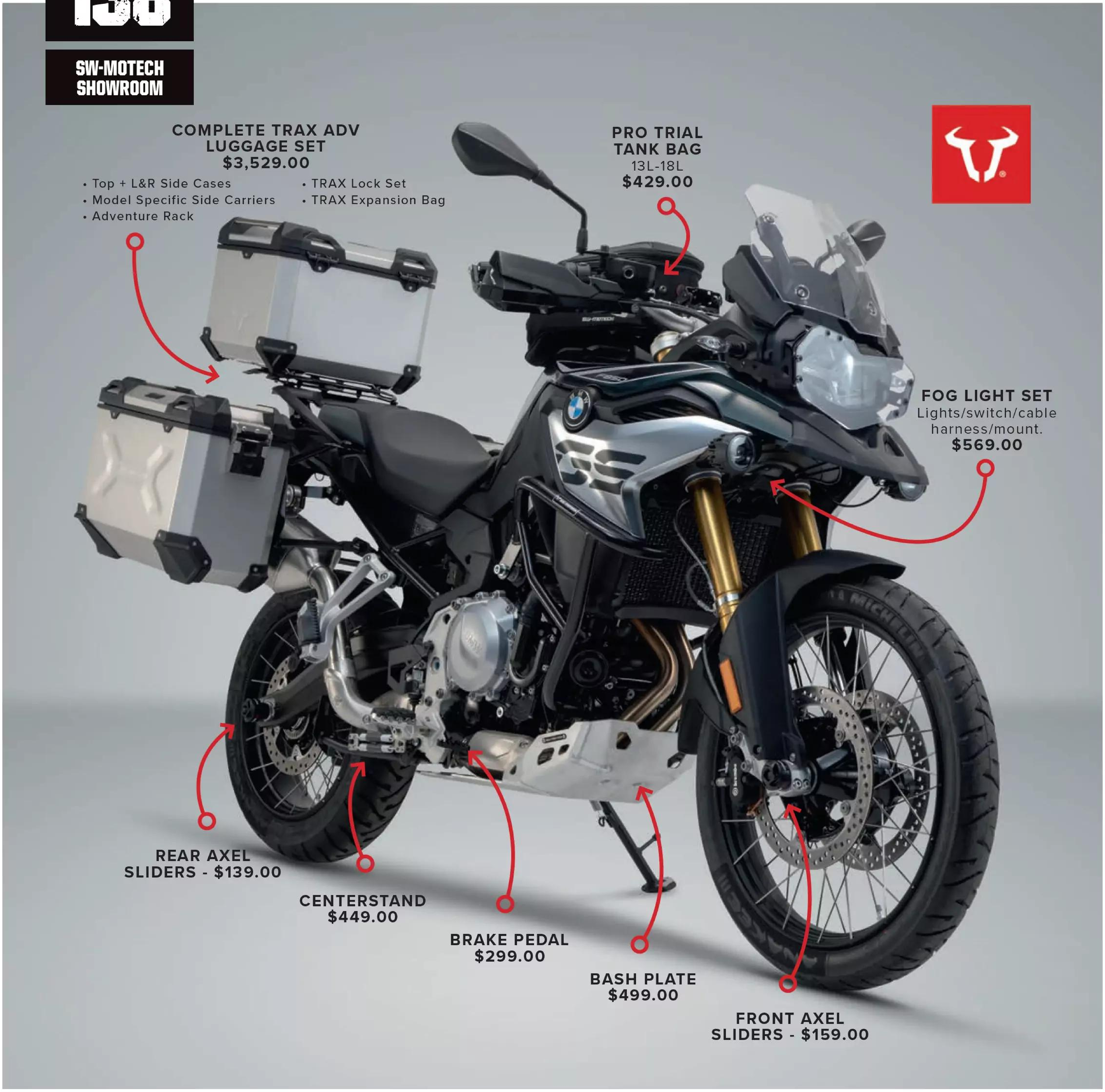
Should the weather turn cold or wet mid-ride, the jacket includes Leatt's Hydradri MAX liner that can be worn inside or outside the jacket, while the pants come with a removable waterproof inner liner.

After 12 months of regular wear and tear, the Flowtour gear is holding up to the abuse really well, and the fact that Leatt offers a five-year warranty on the gear tells you they're confident it's in for the long haul.

The Flowtour jacket is available in sizes S through 5XL, while the pants run S through 4XL. Both are available in stealth black, and that's the only chink in the armour I see for this gear: a lighter colour-way, say light grey, would make the Flowtour range 'feel' even cooler to wear — maybe next season? — Clubby.

RRP: Jacket $849.99; Pants $649.99

www.leattmoto.com.au



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SW-MOTECH'S BMW F 850 GS

BMW's F 850 GS adventure bike is built for exploring wide-open spaces. But when you're levelling up for a serious adventure, make sure you start your search with SW-MOTECH luggage and protection parts. You'll find a range of rugged, waterproof and transportable luggage solutions for all bikes. From tank bags to luggage sets to lights to accessories, SW-MOTECH products are trusted by adventure riders around the globe. Ask for SW-MOTECH at your favourite powersports dealer. Proudly distributed by A1 Accessory Imports.

SW-MOTECH®

TANK BAGS
MIRRORS, LIGHTS & GPS MOUNTS
TRAVEL CASES
PROTECTION
DRYBAGS

ROBUST & ***STYLISH*** LUGGAGE BUILT WITH METICULOUS ***ATTENTION TO DETAIL.***

For 25 years, we have been serving the needs of adventure motorcyclists around the globe.
Our innovative luggage and protection parts have been engineered down to the smallest detail, for every model and every adventure. Bike-specific tank rings, sleek luggage carriers and mounts for bags, cases and GPS devices.
We understand the longing for freedom and adventure that drives every motorcyclist. Our products are made to support this passion and offer you maximum comfort, convenience and safety on every ride.

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